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STANDARD BEFORE AND AFTER THE ROTATION

Posted in **Feature** on October 18, 2006



By Frank Karsten

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THE TOP 8 STANDARD DECKS FROM THE MAGIC ONLINE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS QUALIFIER AND A LOOK AT SOME TOP DECKS AFTER TIME SPIRAL HITS THE FORMAT.

From November 29 to December 3, Paris becomes the center of the **Magic** universe, as the city will serve as the host for the 2006 World Championships. Players from around the world will flock to the Louvre with dreams of being crowned World Champion. The previous three years, *Magic Online* got to send one of its own to compete. Previous winners of this honor are Andrew Cuneo (2003), Toshinori Shigehara (2004) and Adam Klein (2005). These are the top 8 players of this year's *Magic Online* World Championships Qualifier, which was held last weekend:

1. FelixLeong2; [Dutch Simic Aggro](#)
2. Draft Paradise; [Heartbeat combo](#)
3. AMMP; [Heartbeat combo](#)
4. MistikSnake; [French UW Weenie](#)
5. StoneWee; [Satanic Sligh](#)
6. tedshroyer; [UGw Beats](#)
7. Juomaru; [Solar Flare](#)
8. BigLevo; RBW Control with Angels



I'm not putting up a metagame table this week, mainly because the current Standard format is on its way out. In a few weeks, *Time Spiral* will replace *Kamigawa* Block, and that's going to change everything. If you're still interested in the latest Standard developments, you can click on the above Top 8 deck names (excepting RBW Control with Angels, for which I didn't get a decklist) to go to a corresponding post in my deck-o-pedia thread, where you can see the decklist and a short interview with the player piloting it to the World Championships Qualifier Top 8. There's quite a vast resource of information there, so check it out by clicking on the deck you're interested in. If you're more interested in the new Standard with *Time Spiral* (as I would imagine most of you are), I will have some cool decklists for you later in this column.

But first ... an interview with FelixLeong2, who won the World Championships Qualifier.

Online Tech: Congratulations! Can you tell us a bit about yourself? What's your name and where are you from?

FelixLeong2: My name is Leong Bao Jie Felix and I'm from Singapore.

OnlineTech: And what deck did you play?

FelixLeong2: I played Dutch Simic Aggro. I played the exact list as the Top 8 of the Dutch National Championships. I feel that that list can't really be improved.

DUTCH SIMIC AGGRO – STANDARD



DECKLIST

STATS

SAMPLE HAND

SORT BY: Overview ▼

Creature (27)

4 Birds of Paradise
 4 Llanowar Elves
 4 Plaxmanta
 4 Ohran Viper
 4 Trygon Predator
 4 Ninja of the Deep Hours
 3 Meloku the Clouded Mirror

Instant (8)

2 Spell Snare
 4 Mana Leak
 2 Remand

Artifact (4)

4 Umezawa's Jitte

Land (21)

6 Forest
 3 Island
 4 Breeding Pool
 1 Simic Growth Chamber
 4 Yavimaya Coast
 1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge
 1 Oboro, Palace in the Clouds
 1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers

60 Cards***Sideboard (15)***

2 Arashi, the Sky Asunder
 3 Hinder
 2 Pithing Needle

2 Higure, the Still Wind
 2 Iwamori of the Open Fist
 4 Threads of Disloyalty

OnlineTech: Why did you choose to play that deck?

FelixLeong2: I had been running it for the past few weeks and it has been very great. I could consistently make top 8 of Standard 2x Premier Events and even made the finals of two of them in a row with it. Secondly, I love playing tempo based decks and setting the pressure on the opponent. But frankly speaking I was very lucky to win this event, as this deck really needs the turn 2 [Ninja of the Deep Hours](#) into [Ohran Viper](#) to win the game.

OnlineTech: What were your best and worst matchups?

FelixLeong2: Any non-aggressive and control decks, for example Solar Flare, Heartbeat combo, [Magnivore](#), and Izzetron are good matchups for me. Bad matchups are aggressive and anti-creature decks, for example Satanic Sligh, GhaziGlare, and Zoo.

OnlineTech: What were the most memorable moments for you?

FelixLeong2: I actually lost my first round. I was very depressed losing round 1 to [Magnivore](#), which is a good matchup for me. I was considering dropping to play in the *Ninth Edition* Sealed Deck 4x Premier Event, but my clanmates from Diplomats advised me to play on. So I did that, but took part in the *Ninth Edition* Sealed Deck 4x Premier Event as well. I dropped out of that tournament at 4-2 to focus back on the World Championships Qualifier, where I kept on winning. Amazingly, I won back to back 10 matches in a row, eventually winning the whole thing!

OnlineTech: Wow, what a comeback. Good choice not to drop out. How do you feel, knowing you're going to the **Magic** World Championships?

FelixLeong2: It feels great! I have never been to Paris and it feels even better to play at Worlds again. I took part in the World Championships in Yokohama 2005, representing team Singapore. We end up 5th in the National team competition, and I ended up 80th place individually. I hope I can do better this year and will cheer on team Singapore to make Sunday.

OnlineTech: You've won an all-expense paid trip for two. Who will you take?

FelixLeong2: I will bring my brother, as he is my only sibling. Even though he doesn't play **Magic** anymore, I am sure he will enjoy a holiday to Paris with me.

OnlineTech: Anyone you'd like to thank?

FelixLeong: I would like to shout out a big thank you to all my clanmates in Diplomats and also say hi to all my friends in Singapore. I wouldn't still be playing **Magic** without you guys!

OnlineTech: Good luck in the World Championships Felix!

The New Standard, Post-Rotation

Kamigawa block is rotating out soon, and *Time Spiral* will take its place. *Time Spiral* goes on sale in the **Magic Online** store on Monday, October 30th at 9:00 am PST. Thanks to *Coldsnap* and the *Time Spiral* "timeshifted" purple cards, we'll have the largest Standard card pool ever once the full *Time Spiral* Block is released. That prospect excites me because it offers extra possibilities for deck building, which is a passion of mine. I have already been building various decks for the new Standard with *Time Spiral*, and today I'll tell you what kind of decks I expect the new metagame to consist of. I think the new Standard metagame can roughly be divided in four basic types: control, aggro-burn, mid-range, and combo. I'll give an example decklist for each of those types. Since those four decks cover four different strategies, they should make up a good starting point for a playtest gauntlet. Also, feel free to copy my lists and play them in your State Championships or online events. Pro Player of the Year Kenji Tsumura just saw me typing this paragraph on my laptop at the Grand Prix site in Athens and told me he is copying my decks, so that was nice.

TYPE A: CONTROL

BLUE-WHITE CONTROL – STANDARD



DECKLIST

STATS

SAMPLE HAND

SORT BY: Overview ▾**Creature (9)**

3 Court Hussar
 3 Akroma, Angel of Wrath
 3 Adarkar Valkyrie

Sorcery (11)

4 Wrath of God
 4 Compulsive Research
 3 Resurrection

Instant (11)

2 Careful Consideration
 4 Remand
 3 Condemn
 2 Cancel

Artifact (5)

4 Azorius Signet
 1 Dimir Signet

Land (24)

3 Azorius Chancery
 3 Flagstones of Trokair
 2 Gemstone Caverns
 2 Urza's Factory
 4 Hallowed Fountain
 4 Adarkar Wastes
 3 Plains
 3 Island

60 Cards**Sideboard (15)**

1 Island	1 Condemn
1 Cancel	3 Shadow of Doubt
3 Spell Snare	3 Faith's Fetters
2 Disenchant	1 Teferi's Moat

[Solar Flare](#) was the dominating control deck in the old Standard. Solar Flare did not lose any key cards in the rotation, since all the *Kamigawa* legends are easily replaceable with other win conditions such as [Adarkar Valkyrie](#), so the deck should carry over nicely to the new Standard. However, *Time Spiral* also offers [Resurrection](#) and [Akroma, Angel of Wrath](#), and that's why I decided to put up this white-blue list here. Blue-White Control is the next logical step after Solar Flare. In the new Standard with *Time Spiral*, you can update the old Solar Flare deck by replacing [Zombify](#) with [Resurrection](#) and [Angel of Despair](#) with [Akroma, Angel of Wrath](#). Furthermore, [Condemn](#) is just about as good as [Mortify](#), if not better, so you can make that swap as well. By making these changes, we have alleviated the need to play black and therefore we can build a more consistent blue-white control deck.

Like any stereotypical control deck, this deck tries to control the early game with [Wrath of God](#) and [Remands](#), and then tries to win the late game with an overload of card advantage and big creatures. The deck usually wins by playing [Resurrection](#) on [Akroma, Angel of Wrath](#), which was discarded to [Compulsive Research](#) or [Careful Consideration](#). The latter is a new *Time Spiral* addition, and it is clearly superior to [Sift](#). This deck brings high card quality to the table and runs a lot of card advantage, so it should always win if the game goes long. Another interesting thing that is easily overlooked is the replacement of the legendary lands such as [Miren, the Moaning Well](#) and [Mikokoro, Center of the Sea](#). They rotate out, so instead I have put in 2 [Gemstone Caverns](#) – which can give a huge tempo swing, since you can go right ahead and play a Signet on turn 1 – and 2 [Urza's Factory](#) – a late game win condition – for value. While we're talking about lands, I also added [Flagstones of Trokair](#) instead of Plains, since it is good against [Wildfire/Smallpox](#), and in the late game you get to filter your deck for lands.

The sideboard includes [Shadow of Doubt](#) as a techy answer to [Dragonstorm](#). [Spell Snare](#) comes in if you're playing second against a deck full of 2-drops. [Faith's Fetters](#) is against aggro decks with burn spells. The rest of the cards are a bit random (including an Island versus land destruction decks), but they can come in handy to tweak the numbers, just as the situation calls for.

Other control decks that you might encounter are [Magnivore](#) and [Izzetron](#), which are both likely to survive the rotation.

TYPE B: AGGRO-BURN

ZOO – STANDARD



DECKLIST

STATS

SAMPLE HAND

SORT BY: Overview ▼

Creature (20)

4 Savannah Lions
 4 Kird Ape
 4 Magus of the Scroll
 4 Watchwolf

4 Scab-Clan Mauler

Sorcery (8)

4 Volcanic Hammer
4 Rift Bolt

Instant (8)

4 Lightning Helix
4 Char

Enchantment (4)

4 Seal of Fire

Land (20)

4 Sacred Foundry
4 Stomping Ground
4 Temple Garden
4 Battlefield Forge
3 Gemstone Mine
1 Karplusan Forest

60 Cards**Sideboard (15)**

4 Cryocasm
2 Tin Street Hooligan
2 Temporal Isolation

3 Giant Growth
2 Ronom Unicorn
2 Paladin en-Vec

We've seen [Zoo](#) before and I expect it will turn out to be the best aggro-burn deck in the new Standard. It has the most efficient and impressive creatures at every mana cost – 2/1 and 2/3 for one mana and 3/3 for two mana. It unfortunately lost [Isamaru, Hound of Konda](#) in the rotation, but [Magus of the Scroll](#) is a reasonable replacement. It's not as good as I had initially thought, but still fine. Zoo finishes the game with highly efficient burn spells including [Char](#) and [Lightning Helix](#). A new *Time Spiral* addition is [Rift Bolt](#). Don't fool yourself by looking at the mana cost. Usually you'll suspend it and then you have three damage for one mana. That's known as [Lightning Bolt](#). It doesn't get better than that.

Zoo is basically the simplest deck in the format.

Zoo is basically the simplest deck in the format. The goal is to take early game initiative and then bury the opponent in an overabundance of burn spells to the head. My version runs the famous 20 creatures – 20 burn spells– 20 lands distribution. You can't argue with the deck's all-out efficiency, and it can definitely get some unbeatable turn 4 kill draws. There used to be objections to the deck that were largely based on its unreliable 3-color mana base, but a new card in *Time Spiral* solves this to a certain extent. I'm talking about [Gemstone Mine](#), the friend of every three-color deck. I don't play four because drawing multiples is bad, but three copies fix the mana base nearly as well.



Note that I do not play [Browbeat](#). So many people seemed to be all over it since the *Time Spiral* spoiler came out, but I don't like the card at all, and I want to explain in depth why you should not put this card in your decks. First of all, the effects are not as good as people would like you to believe. Would you play a card that dealt 5 damage to your opponent for three mana? Questionable. Compare this to [Flames of the Blood Hand](#). Most Zoo decks had cut that card for more efficient burn such as [Seal of Fire](#), since [Flames of the Blood Hand](#) could only target players and it was expensive at three mana. [Flames of the Blood Hand](#) was only playable because it could potentially deal 8 damage for three mana in response to [Loxodon Hierarch](#). [Browbeat](#)'s 5 doesn't compare well with that. Next, would you play a card that drew you three cards for three mana? In a control deck, of course. But Zoo is a lightning fast aggro deck! You would not play [Compulsive Research](#) in this deck if it were red, either. By playing card draw in a deck like this, you give up tempo and give your opponent extra time to stabilize, which is the last thing you want to happen. So neither effect is even that good for this deck. And a final argument against [Browbeat](#), which is probably the most important one, is that you never want to give opponents control over your cards. [Browbeat](#) never does the thing you want it to do. Imagine your opponent is at three and you hope to topdeck a burn spell. Instead, you look at [Browbeat](#), get to draw land-creature-creature and lose. There's a reason nobody played it when it was legal.

In the sideboard you can find [Cryociasm](#), which can keep opponents off of [Loxodon Hierarch](#) or [Dragonstorm](#) mana while dealing three to the head at the same time. Furthermore, you have [Giant Growth](#) against aggro matches, [Tin Street Hooligan](#) and [Ronom Unicorn](#) to replace [Scab-Clan Mauler](#) against decks with targets, [Temporal Isolation](#) for miscellaneous big guys, and [Paladin en-Vec](#) versus Rakdos.

Other aggro-burn decks include [Satanic Sligh](#) (which I don't think will be as good as it was anymore since it loses the incredibly important [Genju of the Spires](#)), [Boros Deck Wins](#), [Gruul beats](#), and we can even make a blue-white aggro-burn deck with [Psionic Blast](#) now.

TYPE C: MID-RANGE

RED-GREEN LAND DESTRUCTION – STANDARD



DECKLIST

STATS

SAMPLE HAND

SORT BY: Overview ▾

Creature (22)

3 Kird Ape
4 Birds of Paradise
4 Llanowar Elves
4 Ohran Viper
4 Avalanche Riders
3 Rumbling Slum

Sorcery (16)

4 Call of the Herd
4 Stone Rain
4 Volcanic Hammer
4 Assault // Battery

Land (22)

2 Skarrg, the Rage Pits
4 Karplusan Forest
4 Stomping Ground
8 Snow-Covered Forest
4 Snow-Covered Mountain

60 Cards

Sideboard (15)

4 Cryocasm	4 Spike Feeder
3 Tin Street Hooligan	2 Dodecapod
2 Parallelectric Feedback	

The core of this deck is turn 1 [Llanowar Elves/Birds of Paradise](#), turn 2 [Call of the Herd/Ohran Viper](#). With that base established, the other cards in the deck don't actually matter all that much. You could delve into blue for [Remand](#) and [Mana Leak](#), add black for [Dark Confidant](#) and [Hypnotic Specter](#), or put in red for [Stone Rain](#) and [Avalanche Riders](#). I like the latter the best, and made the above deck.

This might be a good time to end the [KarstenBotBabyKiller](#) joke. I did not build that deck; Mike Flores did and then started an elaborate joke by naming the deck after me and by crediting it to me. I happily continued the practical joke, but it has gotten a bit out of hand since I got infinite questions about the deck. Nevertheless, the deck remains quite good. I have seen its sheer power in action, and my friend Jeroen Remie is something like 30-10 with it in 8-man queues. The deck is still recommended for Standard events in the next couple weeks.

However, in the new Standard I don't like KarstenBotBabyKiller's game plan anymore. Main reason for this is that white control decks have a new win condition. Previously, you could overwhelm those decks with [Scrying Sheets](#) for card advantage and [Skred](#) for their win conditions. Unfortunately, [Akroma, Angel of Wrath](#) has protection from red, so you cannot reasonably expect to win a long game against a white control deck anymore. Therefore I had to update the deck by making it faster, and the above red/green deck is one that I did build myself for a change. [Scrying Sheets](#) therefore got lost in the shuffle. [Kird Ape](#), [Rumbling Slum](#), and burn spells speed up the damage clock quite a bit. The land destruction element is still present, but it's mainly in there to steal tempo from your opponent. [Volcanic Hammer](#) and [Assault // Battery](#) get the nod over [Demonfire](#) and [Char](#) because of mana curve issues.

The sideboard holds [Cryoclam](#), which I did not dare to play maindeck in an unexplored metagame, [Spike Feeder](#) as a mini-[Loxodon Hierarchy](#), [Tin Street Hooligan](#) against decks with Signets, [Dodecapod](#) against [Smallpox](#) discard decks, and [Parallelectric Feedback](#) as a techy answer to [Dragonstorm](#).

Other mid-range decks include [Orzhov aggro](#), other base-green decks with turn 2 [Ohran Vipers](#), and [GhaziGlare](#).

TYPE D: COMBO

DRAGONSTORM COMBO – STANDARD



DECKLIST

STATS

SAMPLE HAND

SORT BY:

Creature (7)

4 Bogardan Hellkite
1 Hunted Dragon
2 Grozoth

Sorcery (16)

4 Dragonstorm
4 Rite of Flame
4 Sleight of Hand
4 Compulsive Research

Instant (4)

4 Seething Song

Artifact (10)

4 Lotus Bloom
 4 Izzet Signet
 2 Simic Signet

Land (23)

4 Shivan Reef
 4 Steam Vents
 4 Urza's Mine
 4 Urza's Power Plant
 4 Urza's Tower
 3 Island

60 Cards**Sideboard (15)**

3 Pyroclasm
 3 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir
 3 Spell Snare

3 Repeal
 3 Ignorant Bliss

This is a new combo deck inspired by *Time Spiral* cards. The idea behind the deck is to play [Dragonstorm](#) with a storm count of at least three and search 4 [Bogardan Hellkite](#) out of your deck, dealing 20 damage to your opponent right away. Since the deck is focused around generating a high storm count, it plays awful mana producers such as [Rite of Flame](#). The perfect draw involves turn 1 [Shivan Reef](#), 4 [Rite of Flame](#), [Dragonstorm](#). But those turn 1 kills are obviously extremely rare, of course. A more reasonable start would be turn 1 [Sleight of Hand](#) suspending [Lotus Bloom](#), turn 2 [Izzet Signet](#), and turn 3 [Compulsive Research](#). Then on turn 4 your [Lotus Bloom](#) becomes unsuspending, you follow it up with a [Rite of Flame](#) and a [Seething Song](#), and cast [Dragonstorm](#) for the kill.

I play Urza lands in this deck because the extra mana could make the difference against decks that counter your [Seething Songs](#). Furthermore, the Urzatron allows you to hardcast any [Bogardan Hellkites](#) you might draw. [Grozoth](#) is also an important part of this deck in my opinion, because it gets you a [Dragonstorm](#) for three mana. I play 1 backup [Hunted Dragon](#); that way you can still search 20 damage out of your deck even if you draw one dragon. My sideboard addresses some of the hate you can expect to face. You have [Pyroclasm](#) against fast beats, [Repeal](#) against [Circle of Protection: Red](#), [Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir](#) against [Trickbind](#), [Ignorant Bliss](#) against discard, and [Spell Snare](#) against [Shadow of Doubt](#).

Another combo deck that might make a showing resolves around dealing infinite damage with [Enduring Renewal](#), [Wild Cantor](#), and [Grapeshot](#).

That's all I've got for today. Feel free to discuss the decks I proposed; that's what the forums are for. Just don't expect an answer from me, as I'll be in Kobe this week for the Pro Tour.

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