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# Set the Target. Be the Man.

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Swimming With Sharks  
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Champs is this weekend.

I know, I know. Some Champs tournaments were actually *last* weekend, but for this article's purposes, let's just go with "Champs is this weekend."

For most players, Champs is not just the opportunity to defend their local turf and swing big for bragging rights... It's the first chance to play with *Time Spiral* in sanctioned Standard. Most years, players come into Champs fairly cold, relying on skeletons of decks from the previous year's Standard, or cribbing from the immediately preceding Block Constructed PTQs... and Ravnica Block didn't have any of those. Theoretically, with the tidal wave of *Time Spiral* crashing into the already diverse landscape of Ravnica-influenced Standard with its multitude of dual lands, the format should be more random than ever. Fear not, wary traveler! Swimming With Sharks has something special for you. Last weekend, the stage was set by a couple of Standard tournaments around the world. We have a couple of deck lists that should serve as benchmarks, punching bags... and hopefully inspiration.



You may have caught a blog entry in the Kobe coverage that contained what Ted Knutson called "this season's debutantes." Here they are again:

## Hiroki Otsuka

King's Games Standard Top 8

Main Deck <i>60 cards</i>	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Brushland</li> <li>1 Flagstones of Trokair</li> <li>1 Gemstone Mine</li> <li>3 Karplusan Forest</li> <li>1 Pendelhaven</li> <li>4 Sacred Foundry</li> <li>4 Stomping Ground</li> <li>4 Temple Garden</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>19 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Avalanche Riders</li> <li>3 Birds of Paradise</li> <li>4 Kird Ape</li> <li>4 Llanowar Elves</li> <li>2 Thornscape Battlemage</li> <li>4 Watchwolf</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>20 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Call of the Herd</li> <li>2 Char</li> <li>4 Cryociasm</li> <li>4 Lightning Helix</li> <li>1 Loxodon Warhammer</li> <li>3 Seal of Fire</li> <li>3 Stone Rain</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>21 other spells</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Birds of Paradise</li> <li>1 Karplusan Forest</li> <li>4 Naturalize</li> <li>2 Paladin en-Vec</li> <li>2 Sacred Ground</li> <li>1 Seal of Fire</li> <li>1 Stone Rain</li> <li>3 Volcanic Hammer</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

This is a hybrid beatdown deck somewhat reminiscent of 8StoneRain.dec. The difference between Otsuka's deck and that Sea Stompy variant is that it goes white for *Watchwolf* and support cards, rather than blue for *Trygon Predator* and counterspells.

The land destruction theme here is fairly light, but with drops like *Kird Ape* and *Watchwolf*, any pronounced tempo in the early game can prove fatal for the opponent. Otsuka's deck has seven one-mana accelerators to facilitate his second turn *Stone Rain* or *Cryociasm*; *Avalanche Riders* is a redundancy, potential threat, and, oftentimes, a *Fog* for dangerous creatures.

*Loxodon Warhammer* seems an odd choice, but with sufficient mana, it can turn almost any creature into a legitimate threat. One thing to remember with this deck is that with the white splash, *Thornscape Battlemage* can

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kill Signets, not just bears, so that the card is useful both against little beaters and as a semi-redundancy on the mana control theme.



Toshihumi Hanaoka		
King's Games Standard Top 8		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
3 Scrying Sheets	4 Cancel	4 Greater Gargadon
13 Snow-Covered Island	2 Careful Consideration	2 Plagiarize
5 Snow-Covered Mountain	3 Mana Leak	3 Pyroclasm
4 Steam Vents	4 Remand	3 Serrated Arrows
25 lands	3 Repeal	3 Spell Snare
4 Phyrexian Ironfoot	3 Rewind	15 sideboard cards
2 Rimefeather Owl	4 Skred	
3 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir	3 Think Twice	
9 creatures	26 other spells	

This deck takes the typical Blue Snow theme and splashes Red for **Skred**, a card that was called the best card of the previous Standard. Hanaoka's mana base is actually more robust than it might initially seem, with its strange-looking *three Scrying Sheets* and the atypical **Steam Vents** (which are not Snow lands) supporting a minor Snow theme. Unlike some Snow decks that play all Snow lands and many Snow creatures, this one is actually a one-for-one permission deck that can certainly profit over time when it has spare mana but has other avenues for card advantage (**Careful Consideration** and **Think Twice** are both self-contained card advantage and a combo with one another).

The **Skred** splash makes the deck much stronger against opponents like Zoo than most decks of this stripe, but even with **Repeal** and quick **Phyrexian Ironfoot**, this deck isn't looking for the aggro matchup. The fact that it can stick and protect a **Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir** helps to resolve **Rimefeather Owl**, a sure game winner... if quite expensive.

Kunihiro Yano		
King's Games Standard Top 8		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
4 Boros Garrison	4 Azorius Signet	1 Demonfire
4 Hallowed Fountain	4 Compulsive Research	4 Disenchant
2 Izzet Boilerworks	4 Condemn	2 Evangelize
3 Plains	1 Demonfire	4 Pyroclasm
3 Prahv, Spires of Order	1 Evangelize	4 Sacred Ground
4 Sacred Foundry	4 Faith's Fetters	15 sideboard cards
4 Steam Vents	4 Lightning Helix	
24 lands	2 Sacred Mesa	
4 Firemane Angel	2 Story Circle	
4 creatures	2 Tidings	
	4 Wrath of God	
	32 other spells	

This is a fairly straightforward **Firemane Angel** control deck, albeit focused on board control like certain of the PT Charleston versions, rather than breaking Zur's Weirding long game with **Firemane Angel** or trying to take "true" control like Kamiel's Top 16 deck from PT Honolulu.

While it does not play permission or lock elements, the Yano deck has tons of card drawing and even more creature kill. Between **Condemn**, **Lightning Helix**, **Faith's Fetters**, and **Wrath of God**, beatdown decks are in a lot of trouble. **Story Circle** can force the opponent to overcommit... and then BAM! **Wrath of God** gets card advantage. **Evangelize** (with two in the sideboard) give this deck a nice out to **Akroma, Angel of Wrath**, which is ironic from a flavor point of view but delicious otherwise.

### Ken'ichi Abe

King's Games Standard Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Char	4 Cryociasm
2 Flagstones of Trokair	2 Demonfire	3 Paladin en-Vec
3 Mountain	4 Lightning Helix	3 Ronom Unicorn
8 Plains	4 Rift Bolt	3 Temporal Isolation
4 Sacred Foundry	4 Seal of Fire	2 Worship
21 lands	1 Threaten	15 sideboard cards
	4 Volcanic Hammer	
	23 other spells	
2 Leonin Skyhunter		
3 Magus of the Scroll		
4 Savannah Lions		
3 Skyknight Legionnaire		
4 Soltari Priest		
16 creatures		

This may be the first look at Boros Deck Wins I've ever seen that has more burn spells than creatures... And what an unusual creature mix we have! I actually don't really understand the numbers on **Leonin Skyhunter** (2) versus **Skyknight Legionnaire** (3) or the absence of **Boros Garrison**, but besides these individual tweaks and odd balance on the proactive elements side, Abe's deck is a straightforward implementation. The Lions and two-drops (and three three-drops) soften the opponent up, then you put the scoundrel out of business with one or a flurry of those 23 burn spells. **Threaten** and **Demonfire** are particularly suited to the job, **Threaten** because it invalidates the control "tap out for a monolith" defensive strategy and **Demonfire** because, hell, it's **Demonfire**, and not even **Honorable Passage** or **Circle of Protection: Red** will save you.

### Ryosuke Adachi

King's Games Standard Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Caves of Koilos	4 Castigate	4 Ghost Council of Orzhova
4 Godless Shrine	4 Mortify	4 Leyline of the Void
1 Orzhova, the Church of Deals	3 Phyrexian Arena	3 Persecute
5 Plains	3 Phyrexian Totem	4 Sacred Ground
10 Swamp	4 Stupor	15 sideboard cards
24 lands	4 The Rack	
	4 Wrath of God	
	26 other spells	
2 Angel of Despair		
4 Hypnotic Specter		
4 Ravenous Rats		
10 creatures		



Adachi's deck has a massive amount of discard. He has **Stupor** and **Castigate**... and eight of his creatures for discard. Now sometimes a discard deck can get the advantage in the early game, but because most of black's cheap creatures are nothing to write home about offensively, the opponent has a chance to draw out of the disruption or even get ahead if he is blue.

Welcome to **The Rack!** **The Rack** helps to cut down the number of turns the opponent has. If you get him down... he's staying down. Beatdown decks especially have problems fighting **The Rack**. The dilemma is that an opposing beatdown deck that has been halted in the short term is almost necessarily losing the race to **The Rack**... but playing out threats to fight back *just makes The Rack better*. On the other hand, holding back non-essential lands makes the discard better. It can be miserable.

In previous formats, and for about the past seven years even through Extended, beatdown decks - certainly the kind like we have in Standard with 3/3 creatures for two and a lot of card advantage and efficient burn spells - could race because the discard creatures suck(ed) in comparison, but **The Rack** really changes that math.

### Nobuhito Ohmichi

King's Games Standard Top 8		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Blood Crypt	4 Char	2 Bottled Cloister
3 Gemstone Caverns	3 Demonfire	4 Cryoclast
7 Mountain	4 Rift Bolt	2 Deathmark
3 Rakdos Carnarium	4 Seal of Fire	4 Giant Solifuge
4 Sulfurous Springs	3 Shock	3 Hit // Run
1 Swamp	4 Volcanic Hammer	15 sideboard cards
22 lands	22 other spells	
4 Dark Confidant		
4 Magus of the Scroll		
4 Rakdos Guildmage		
4 Shadow Guildmage		
16 creatures		

Ohmichi's is pretty close to the default Rakdos 60 for Standard. This archetype is hell on anything relying on *Birds of Paradise* and *Llanowar Elves* due to *Shadow Guildmage*, and can burn out decks that deploy turn four *Akroma, Angel of Wrath* with surprising defiance. I think that Nobuhiro's deck is short maybe 1-2 lands (probably the fourth *Rakdos Carnarium* should be there), and I personally have had no luck whatsoever with *Gemstone Caverns*, which, by the by, is atrocious in multiples. You really want to hit ⚡ on turn one and ⚡ on turn two, because that is what your vital early game drops cost to play. *Shadow Guildmage* gets worse as the game progresses but really retards a green deck's game plan if you can hit it on the first.

Makoto Shiotani King's Games Standard Top 8		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
6 Forest	4 Call of the Herd	4 Cryoclast
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Char	2 Giant Solifuge
7 Mountain	4 Rift Bolt	2 Krosan Grip
4 Stomping Ground	3 Seal of Fire	2 Moldervine Cloak
21 lands	4 Volcanic Hammer	2 Parallelectric Feedback
	19 other spells	3 Rumbling Slum
		15 sideboard cards
4 Avalanche Riders		
4 Burning-Tree Shaman		
4 Kird Ape		
4 Llanowar Elves		
4 Scab-Clan Mauler		
20 creatures		

Shiotani's deck is almost Heezy Street, but with *Avalanche Riders* on haste four in lieu of *Giant Solifuge*. I can see the attractiveness of this choice in a world of Karoos, but Mark would not approve.

The switch of *Frenzied Goblin* and *Scorched Rusalka* into *Llanowar Elves* gave Shiotani an excuse to cut lands (specifically the *Rage Pits*) and also a more explosive *Burning-Tree Shaman* and *Call of the Herd* early game. Otherwise, this deck echoes the PT - Honolulu Champion's deck (efficient beatdown drops in the early-to-middle turns), but with a greater emphasis on burn cards to improve the control matchup Game One.

Tsubasa Kai King's Games Standard Winner		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Brushland	4 Call of the Herd	4 Giant Solifuge
5 Forest	4 Glare of Subdual	2 Indrik Stomphowler
1 Pendelhaven	3 Stonewood Invocation	1 Krosan Grip
1 Plains	11 other spells	4 Mwonvuli Acid-Moss
4 Selesnya Sanctuary		4 Thrill of the Hunt
4 Temple Garden		15 sideboard cards
4 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree		
23 lands		
1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath		

- 3 Birds of Paradise
- 4 Llanowar Elves
- 4 Loxodon Hierarch
- 2 Saffi Eriksdotter
- 4 Selesnya Guildmage
- 4 Thelonite Hermit
- 4 Yavimaya Dryad

26 creatures

Finally we have the tournament winner! In case you didn't notice, the Japan Top 8 was largely creature decks, and G/W *Glare of Subdual* specializes in beating creature decks. Kai (You've got to love that name for a tournament champion!) upgraded *Wood Elves* to *Yavimaya Dryad* for this version and added a host of new cards: *Saffi Eriksdotter*, one *Akroma, Angel of Wrath*, *Stonewood Invocation*, and four big *Thelonite Hermits*. The inclusion of the Hermits echoes old style *Deranged Hermit* + *Opposition* decks, and gives Kai's version a "9/9" threat to win quickly after tapping down potential defenders.



Overall this deck is straightforward *Glare of Subdual* with no dedicated search (*Chord of Calling* or *Congregation at Dawn*, a.k.a. "Three Stupid Elephants"), instead focusing on a quicker, almost guaranteed, kill via *Stonewood Invocation*. This is a superb choice for creature metagames but possibly a gamble if the guy on the other side of the table is Solar *Flare*.

Meanwhile, at the Mother to Presidents, Star City Games held a pre-Champs cash tournament that may be more influential, especially for American players aiming for the tournaments formerly known as States.

### Nathan Twigg – Zoo

Star City Games Standard Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Battlefield Forge</li> <li>3 Gemstone Mine</li> <li>3 Karplusan Forest</li> <li>4 Sacred Foundry</li> <li>4 Stomping Ground</li> <li>4 Temple Garden</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>20 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Kird Ape</li> <li>2 Magus of the Scroll</li> <li>4 Savannah Lions</li> <li>4 Scab-Clan Mauler</li> <li>2 Scorched Rusalka</li> <li>4 Watchwolf</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>20 creatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Char</li> <li>4 Giant Growth</li> <li>4 Lightning Helix</li> <li>4 Rift Bolt</li> <li>4 Volcanic Hammer</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>20 other spells</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Circle of Protection: Red</li> <li>4 Cryoclash</li> <li>2 Leyline of Lifeforce</li> <li>3 Naturalize</li> <li>2 Paladin en-Vec</li> <li>2 Pardic Dragon</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

We have been saying for some time that even if Zoo isn't The Deck to Beat, it is the deck THAT beats. Make sure you test against decks that can go first turn *Kird Ape*, second turn *Watchwolf* if you want to be a Champs winner. *Giant Growth* may not be that exciting in the abstract, but there are few ways to get a more realistic idea of how good your deck is than battling against the red, white, and *green* monsters backed up by burn.


### Brian Smith – UW Control

Star City Games Standard Top 8


Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Adarkar Wastes</li> <li>3 Azorius Chancery</li> <li>1 Calciform Pools</li> <li>4 Hallowed Fountain</li> <li>5 Island</li> <li>4 Plains</li> <li>3 Urza's Factory</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>24 lands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>35 other spells</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 Cancel</li> <li>4 Condemn</li> <li>3 Faith's Fetters</li> <li>4 Mana Leak</li> <li>4 Remand</li> <li>3 Repeal</li> <li>2 Sacred Mesa</li> <li>4 Think Twice</li> <li>3 Tidings</li> <li>4 Wrath of God</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath</li> <li>3 Circle of Protection: Red</li> <li>2 Rewind</li> <li>3 Sacred Ground</li> <li>1 Sacred Mesa</li> <li>2 Shadow of Doubt</li> <li>3 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>15 sideboard cards</p>

1 creatures

Here is an example of what classic U/W control might look like in *Time Spiral* Standard. The defense robust with **Faith's Fetters**, **Condemn**, **Wrath of God**, and copious permission. The endgame is simply the best in the format, albeit requiring eight main phase mana, in **Akroma**, **Angel of Wrath**. The innovation, or alternate kill at least, is **Sacred Mesa**. With this down, Smith's deck can overwhelm another control player or run a frustrating defense for creatures that forces over-commitment into **Wrath of God**.

Chris Woltreck – G/R LD		
Star City Games Standard Top 8		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
2 Mouth of Ronom	4 Call of the Herd	3 Giant Solifuge
3 Scrying Sheets	4 Cryoclast	2 Serrated Arrows
8 Snow-Covered Forest	4 Demonfire	3 Skred
6 Snow-Covered Mountain	4 Stone Rain	4 Spike Feeder
4 Stomping Ground	3 Stormbind	3 Wreak Havoc
23 lands	19 other spells	15 sideboard cards
4 Birds of Paradise		
2 Boreal Druid		
4 Llanowar Elves		
4 Ohran Viper		
2 Rumbling Slum		
2 Stalking Yeti		
18 creatures		

This is a solid look at a post-Kamigawa, *Time Spiral*-legal version of the deck Frank talked about in [My Babykiller Part 1](#) and other articles. The interesting delta to me is removing **Into the North** and sideboarding **Skred** for main-deck **Stormbind** and **Rumbling Slum**. I actually quite liked **Into the North** because it allowed the deck to play only one **Mouth of Ronom** and increased the frequency of hitting **Scrying Sheets** (which Woltreck has reduced to three copies). Like the U/R deck we saw above, this one runs a de-emphasized **Scrying Cheats** engine but can benefit over many games whenever it has spare mana (**Boreal Druid**, **Ohran Viper**, and **Stalking Yeti** bolster the mana base).

Mike Mihealsick – B/W/r Firemane		
Star City Games Standard Top 8		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
3 Blood Crypt	1 Boros Signet	1 Condemn
1 Boros Garrison	3 Castigate	3 Faith's Fetters
3 Caves of Koilos	3 Condemn	3 Hide // Seek
1 Flagstones of Trokair	3 Demonfire	2 Persecute
2 Gemstone Mine	4 Lightning Helix	3 Sacred Ground
3 Godless Shrine	3 Mortify	3 Tormod's Crypt
1 Orzhov Basilica	2 Orzhov Signet	15 sideboard cards
2 Plains	2 Persecute	
1 Rakdos Carnarium	4 Phyrexian Arena	
1 Rix Maadi, Dungeon Palace	2 Void	
3 Sacred Foundry	4 Wrath of God	
1 Swamp	31 other spells	
1 Urza's Factory		
23 lands		
2 Angel of Despair		
4 Firemane Angel		
6 creatures		

Out **Compulsive Research**, in **Phyrexian Arena**. Out permission, in, discard. Out **Zur's Weirthing**, in, um, **Phyrexian Arena** again.

The Arena serves multiple purposes here. First of all, it is the new draw engine over blue. It is vastly inferior in that it costs you life and doesn't discard **Firemane Angel**, and superior in that it is an essentially never-ending supply of card advantage without mana requirement long game, rather than a three mana single shot at your next land or a raw +1. While it lacks the obvious synergy with **Firemane Angel** that **Compulsive Research** has, **Phyrexian Arena** has what we call in the trade "a sick combo" where **Firemane Angel** essentially erases the

Arena's drawback, setting the deck up for a robust anti-control long game and mitigating the potentially disastrous investment against beatdown by *some* margin.

Void is a card Mark Herberholz and I have been trying to break for close to a month. Mihealsick has an admirable redundancy over *Wrath of God* here. His deck seems really nicely set up against creatures in the short term and has numerous ways to annoy control and win long games. I would not like to have to out-think his *Rix Maadi*, *Dungeon Palace* in a twenty turn game.

Yeah, yeah. I think Mike just wanted to hit both sides of *Hide // Seek*, too.



Adam Bowles – Fader		
Star City Games Standard Top 8		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 <i>Caves of Koilos</i>	1 <i>Bottled Cloister</i>	4 <i>Blackmail</i>
4 <i>Flagstones of Trokair</i>	4 <i>Castigate</i>	1 <i>Bottled Cloister</i>
4 <i>Godless Shrine</i>	4 <i>Condemn</i>	3 <i>Darkblast</i>
3 <i>Orzhov Basilica</i>	1 <i>Debtors' Knell</i>	2 <i>Disenchant</i>
3 <i>Plains</i>	3 <i>Faith's Fetters</i>	1 <i>Faith's Fetters</i>
4 <i>Swamp</i>	4 <i>Orzhov Signet</i>	1 <i>Persecute</i>
2 <i>Urza's Factory</i>	2 <i>Persecute</i>	1 <i>Return to Dust</i>
24 lands	4 <i>Phyrexian Arena</i>	2 <i>Sacred Mesa</i>
	1 <i>Phyrexian Totem</i>	15 sideboard cards
	4 <i>Wrath of God</i>	
	28 other spells	
2 <i>Akroma, Angel of Wrath</i>		
1 <i>Angel of Despair</i>		
2 <i>Dimir House Guard</i>		
1 <i>Plague Sliver</i>		
2 <i>Skeletal Vampire</i>		
8 creatures		

We have seen *Dimir House Guard* engines many times in the past. Adam's features *Plague Sliver*, *Faith's Fetters*, *Persecute*, the underrated *Bottled Cloister*, and of course *Wrath of God* as key targets. Otherwise this is a straightforward B/W control deck that plans to win a long game after generating incremental card advantage in the middle turns. Along with another deck in this Top 8, the only deck that was expressly more successful given Bowles's second place finish, Fader features *Ravnica* Block Constructed superstar *Skeletal Vampire* in what is sure to be an illustrious Standard career over the next twelve or so months.

Chris Huff – U/G Beats		
Star City Games Standard Top 8		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 <i>Breeding Pool</i>	4 <i>Call of the Herd</i>	3 <i>Gather Courage</i>
1 <i>Desert</i>	4 <i>Mana Leak</i>	4 <i>Giant Solifuge</i>
6 <i>Forest</i>	4 <i>Moldervine Cloak</i>	2 <i>Krosan Grip</i>
6 <i>Island</i>	4 <i>Psionic Blast</i>	3 <i>Repeal</i>
1 <i>Pendelhaven</i>	2 <i>Voidslime</i>	3 <i>Trickbind</i>
4 <i>Yavimaya Coast</i>	18 other spells	15 sideboard cards
22 lands		
4 <i>Birds of Paradise</i>		
4 <i>Llanowar Elves</i>		
4 <i>Looter il-Kor</i>		
4 <i>Ohran Viper</i>		
4 <i>Plaxmanta</i>		
20 creatures		

James Dostie – U/G Beats		
Star City Games Standard Top 8		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		

60 cards		
4 Breeding Pool	4 Call of the Herd	3 Carven Caryatid
5 Forest	4 Mana Leak	3 Repeal
5 Island	4 Moldervine Cloak	3 Shadow of Doubt
1 Pendelhaven	4 Psionic Blast	2 Spell Snare
1 Simic Growth Chamber	4 Remand	2 Stonewood Invocation
4 Yavimaya Coast		2 Trickbind
20 lands		15 sideboard cards
4 Birds of Paradise		
4 Llanowar Elves		
4 Looter il-Kor		
4 Ohran Viper		
4 Plaxmanta		
20 creatures		

Arguably the most significant archetype of the Star City Games tournament was the style of U/G beatdown played by Huff and Dotsie. Numerous U/G decks appeared in the tournament, but only two of the tempo-oriented style coming out of Netherlands Nationals with essentially this same offensive suite and the big FOUR **Moldervine Cloaks** (this writer's pick for best aggressive card in Standard). Both made Top 8.

This style of specifically this archetype is the control killer. Stock Solar Flare is less than 30% to beat it starting, and while it is weak against particular utility permanents out of other creature decks (most notably **Shadow Guildmage** and **Glare of Subdual**), U/G aggro can beat "anything" given the right draw. This is a deck to watch for Saturday, and a short list option to *play*.

Ken Adams – Solar Pox Star City Games Standard Winner		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		<b>Sideboard</b>
1 Dimir Aqueduct	3 Compulsive Research	3 Circle of Protection: Red
4 Flagstones of Trokair	1 Condemn	1 Condemn
2 Gemstone Mine	2 Darkblast	2 Deathmark
2 Ghost Quarter	3 Dread Return	1 Faith's Fetters
4 Godless Shrine	3 Mortify	1 Haakon, Stromgald Scourge
2 Hallowed Fountain	3 Orzhov Signet	2 Nightmare Void
1 Orzhov Basilica	1 Peace of Mind	2 Peace of Mind
1 Snow-Covered Island	1 Phyrexian Totem	3 Trickbind
1 Snow-Covered Plains	4 Smallpox	
2 Snow-Covered Swamp	4 Wrath of God	15 sideboard cards
4 Watery Grave		
25 other spells		
24 lands		
2 Akroma, Angel of Wrath		
2 Angel of Despair		
4 Court Hussar		
2 Haakon, Stromgald Scourge		
1 Skeletal Vampire		
11 creatures		

Finally we have the Star City Games Champion, and oh what a champion it is.

Solar Pox is the most innovative, interesting, and synergistic *idea* of a deck I have seen for *Time Spiral* Standard to date. Adams sloughed some ordinary Solar Flare trappings and added **Smallpox** and a brand new card advantage engine.

Look what **Smallpox** brings to this deck:

1. Obvious combination with **Flagstones of Trokair**
2. Combination with **Haakon, Stromgald Scourge**, either in hand or in play, for long-game card advantage
3. Combination with fatties (from hand) to set up reanimation
4. Defense against beatdown. You don't want to know what happens when this deck is on the play and faces "land, one-drop, go."

The innovative new card advantage engine is based on **Haakon, Stromgald Scourge**. Essentially the goal is to use Haakon to rebuy **Court Hussars** to set up any number of three - rather than six - mana proxies for



Whispers of the Muse + Buyback. Note that Adams could forego the white kick to sacrifice *and then re-play* any Hussar for card advantage rather than board development OR leave the Hussars in play, at his discretion.



A common board position would yield Haakon and two Hussars. Together, they set up the back end of **Dread Return** (also available via debutante **Skeletal Vampire**). The beauty, of course, is that Haakon can rebuild the *exact same position* given a little mana and a little time. Adams may not have had that time given the speed with which one of his seven- or eight-drop Angels can win the game.

I tested this deck about 20 games last night and found it to be superb against conventional beatdown and burn. If a control deck doesn't have a way to contain the Haakon/Hussar loop, Solar Pox can create an insurmountable number of land drops, simultaneously sculpting a superb hand, to win a long attrition war against... well... pretty much any slow deck. Absent **Remands** and main deck interactivity, it is, however, probably a dog against most combo decks.

I think the numbers could use some tweaking, but otherwise? Color me impressed. Solar Pox is innovative, legitimately for real, and should probably be considered short list for deck to play, but oddly enough, probably not Deck to Beat... not *quite yet* at least.

Hopefully checking out last weekend's decks will help you out this Saturday. You have your targets. Never forget the tournament Spike's mantra, taught to me on the day of my own first PTQ win by R&D's own Worth Wollpert: if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!

*Mike has been a leading voice in the game's strategy for as long as there has been a **Magic Internet**. He is the former editor of *The Magic Dojo* and a sometime Pro player. *Michael J. Flores: Deckade*, is a compilation of Mike's first ten years of strategy and theory (i.e. before he joined **magicthegathering.com**), and is available at <http://www.top8magic.com>.*



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