

- U/G Control ■
- U/G/R Aggro ■
- WW ■
- Zombies! ■

Yes, yes! By this writer's count, North American Champs showed us close to *fifty* distinct deck styles, many of which I will discuss in this article.

The legend here differentiates only population in the Top 8 and winners.

Top Level Analysis... of the top level:

Clearly the biggest movers and shakers were the decks this column hyped [last week](#), G/W Ghazi-Glare and Solar Pox, the winners of the Kobe King's Games Standard tournament and the Star City Games \$1500, respectively. Surprising, to me at least, was how well **Dragonstorm** did, peer to Solar Flare and U/W Control in first place finishes, with more Top 8s than either. What was *really* surprising was how my red headed stepchild, KarstenBot BabyKiller – a deck that I, tongue-in-cheek, tried to pass off as the Fanatic's (Frank clearly has too much class for a deck so crass) – held more than its own at the top, tied for third with three Champs victories with the nearly-as-surprising **Dragonstorm** and not-surprising-at-all U/W Control.

I got innumerable emails, private messages, voicemails, notes passed across the classroom, and horse's heads on my pillow asking how I might tune KarstenBot BabyKiller for the current Standard. I told each and every person, and the thousands of lads and lassies who tune into ye olde podcast every week that I was turning my back on the deck for fear of turn-four **Akroma**, **Angel of Wrath**. At least twelve stalwarts proved me wrong, and three of those manascrewed their opponents all the way to first place finishes. Great job, guys! Way to prove the old man wrong.

At New York Champs – and to some degree this seems to translate across the wide expanses of the metagame – the top tables seem much more control-leaning than beatdown. Because of that, despite the first place / first place (wins and Top 8s overall both) that G/W Ghazi-Glare posted, I would still be apprehensive about it as my Weapon of Choice. In particular, in a field where Solar Pox is chased closely by Solar Flare in the top 4 most popular or successful decks, G/W Ghazi-Glare seems a dangerous choice. Don't forget the sentiment from then-defending U.S. National Champion Antonino De Rosa upon making the Top 8 break once again... He said his Glare deck was good against creatures, but not in a Top 8 full of Solar Flare (two Flare decks ended up on the team).

Why might G/W Ghazi-Glare be a potentially bad choice for a Solar / Solar top end environment?

The main incentive of Ghazi-Glare is that it can lock the board with high quality creatures – most significantly **Loxodon Hierarch** – and gain life along the way. That makes Ghazi-Glare hell on creatures. When it debuted on the wide stage of the 2005 World Championships, the deck could lean heavily on **Glare of Subdual** to trump the monolithic finishers of then-top dawg Jushi Blue with anything from a Saproling token up the chain.



The problem in a format where Solar Flare and Solar Pox are top decks – a problem the Worlds 2005 deck didn't have to address as that event was pre-Guildpact – is that the board control deck of choice is base-Orzhov.

Mortify, a card that is just good that most Orzhov decks play and all Solar / Solar decks will play 2-4 copies of main deck – is a mana-efficient trump to G/W's namesake ace, **Glare of Subdual**. Without that enchantment, the Little Green Men cannot realistically cope with a 5/5 flying Vindicate or turn-four Angel of Wrath, especially out of a deck (or two distinct decks, really) that pack the maximum number of copies of **Wrath of God**, eight or more draw spells to get the appropriate response card, essentially as much mana acceleration as G/W, and better finishers in context.



If top-table trends continue, Ghazi-Glare will go from the most successful deck on Week Zero to essentially unplayable. Should the Boros and Zoo aggressors lose popularity in the face of life gain and creature removal, Ghazi-Glare will lose its key prey while the variables around it shift in favor of hostile foes and difficult matchups.

One interesting ray of hope for Glare – not to naysay the top deck *too* much, believe me, I've always loved a Glare deck – is the movement of some Solar Pox players from three Mortifies and three **Condemns** main, shaving a **Mortify**. The Solar Pox players don't want to lose to someone else's Akroma, and **Condemn** is better against Zoo... Glare benefits, obviously, but probably shouldn't get *too* cozy. The opponent has probably still got two Mortifies, two copies of **Angel of Despair**, and three **Dread Returns** to tear up that ace.

Last week we introduced Solar Pox to the wider world, saying that it was a short list deck to *play* but not yet what we would, in the long-lost language of The Dojo, call a Deck to Beat. You can tell this was a correct recommendation because a goodly number of Solar Pox players did their winning. Consider this deck upgraded (which is not, by the by, actually an

upgrade). You can easily tell the difference between a good new deck to play like Solar Pox was and a Deck to Beat (that is, a superb deck, but one everyone is geared to defeat) like Boros Deck Wins, Zoo, or especially U/G Aggro by looking at the finishes. U/G Aggro is the control killer. It was one of the most popular options at Champs and would have been Top 5 out of nearly 50 distinct lines if we counted on popularity alone. U/G commanded not one victory.

The Decks

There were something like fifty different archetypes represented in the North American Top 8s, depending on how you want to cut them. I'm obviously not going to go into each and every deck in detail. If you would like to, check out the Top 8 decks [here](#).

Instead, I am going to focus on what I think is interesting and the mechanics and methodologies of the most important decks to play or beat.

Boros Deck Wins

Gerard Fabiano		3rd Place - New Jersey	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Char	4 Honorable Passage	
4 Boros Garrison	4 Griffin Guide	4 Pacifism	
2 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Lightning Helix	4 Ronom Unicorn	
4 Gemstone Mine	4 Rift Bolt	3 Worship	
2 Plains	4 Volcanic Hammer		
4 Sacred Foundry			
	20 other spells		15 sideboard cards
20 lands			
4 Icatian Javelineers			
4 Knight of the Holy Nimbus			
4 Paladin en-Vec			
4 Savannah Lions			
4 Soltari Priest			
20 creatures			

Gerard picked up a consecutive New Jersey State Championships Top 8 to go with his Player Card this year, running one of the best aggro decks in the format, Boros Deck Wins. You've seen variations on this deck for the past year, with Gerard's Champs deck loosely modeled on 20/20/20 budget Boros and running *four* big Boros Garrisons!

In place of *Umezawa's Jitte*, Gerard packed a card we will see in another strong update, *Griffin Guide*. *Griffin Guide* is essentially a burn spell, sending *Savannah Lions* over *Loxodon Hierarch's* head like a *Char* and leaving a baby *Shock* should the opponent have *Wrath of God*.

The Blink Decks

These decks, which across the various Champs were generally U/G/W (but could easily have been Red for *Avalanche Riders* or Black for *Angel of Despair*) are newcomers based around the key *Time Spiral draft* common *Momentary Blink*.

Tony Menzer		1st Place - Oklahoma	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Breeding Pool	3 Call of the Herd	1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath	
2 Brushland	3 Chord of Calling	1 Azorius Guildmage	
1 Forest	3 Glare of Subdual	4 Carven Caryatid	
1 Hallowed Fountain	4 Momentary Blink	1 Glare of Subdual	
1 Island		1 Indrik Stomphowler	
1 Pendelhaven	13 other spells	1 Jolrael, Empress of Beasts	
1 Simic Growth Chamber		3 Mana Leak	
4 Temple Garden		1 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir	
3 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree		2 Tormod's Crypt	
4 Yavimaya Coast			15 sideboard cards

22 lands
4 Birds of Paradise
4 Coiling Oracle
2 Llanowar Elves
4 Loxodon Hierarch
1 Mangara of Corondor
4 Mystic Snake
3 Selesnya Guildmage
3 Yavimaya Dryad
25 creatures

Tony Menzer took Oklahoma with his Glare hybrid look at Blink.

The Blink decks run a lot of 187 creatures like **Loxodon Hierarch** and **Yavimaya Dryad** that have beneficial effects when they come into play. In the early game, he can be flipping over all kinds of fuel with **Coiling Oracle** to dominate attrition and even exploit the synergy between **Call of the Herd** and **Momentary Blink** to win unexpected fights (believe it or not, a 3/3 Elephant Token can rumble with a **Watchwolf**, put damage on the stack, ask its daddy for some **Momentary Blink** love... *and come back*, even though it is a token creature!).

The really sexy Blink combo is with **Mystic Snake**... Who said we don't have hard counters for two mana any more?

B/R/W Firemane Control

We looked at a similar deck last week, but the B/R/W Firemane Control deck is compelling enough to warrant another mention.

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
3 Battlefield Forge	3 Castigate	1 Castigate
4 Blood Crypt	1 Demonfire	3 Condemn
2 Boros Garrison	3 Faith's Fetters	1 Faith's Fetters
4 Godless Shrine	3 Hide // Seek	1 Hide // Seek
2 Orzhov Basilica	4 Lightning Helix	3 Rise // Fall
1 Orzhov, the Church of Deals	2 Moonlight Bargain	3 Sacred Ground
2 Plains	3 Orzhov Signet	1 Sacred Mesa
3 Sacred Foundry	4 Phyrexian Arena	2 Tormod's Crypt
2 Sulfurous Springs	2 Searing Meditation	15 sideboard cards
23 lands	2 Void	
	4 Wrath of God	
2 Angel of Despair	31 other spells	
4 Firemane Angel		
6 creatures		

As a baseline, B/R/W is very similar to U/R/W **Firemane Angel** Control, substituting black card draw for blue card draw. The synergy with **Compulsive Research** (dumping Angels early and often) is lost, but any **Firemane Angel** online becomes an amazing partner to **Phyrexian Arena** (they balance one another out).

Young's version has a lot of life gain from **Lightning Helix** and **Faith's Fetters**, and can therefore go to town with **Searing Meditation**. Though he doesn't have **Compulsive Research** or **Careful Consideration**, Scott *does* have **Moonlight Bargain** for Firemane synergy and bolsters both his **Wrath of God** and **Castigate** themes with **Void**, which is sweep and hand destruction both.

I haven't actually tried it, but I think **Nightmare Void** might be a good addition to this archetype, at least in the sideboard, because it wants to make opponents discard, *and* dredge is a nice combo with **Firemane Angel**.

Dragonstorm

When your opponent plays two **Lotus Blooms** on the first turn, you usually know what deck he is playing.

There are several **Dragonstorm** decks that you can find browsing this year's Champs decks. They vary on the number of main deck **Gigadrowse** (anti-control), lands, and colors (most are U/R, but many have black), but for the most part these decks play the same way. Turn one Lotus suspend sets up a fourth-turn kill with an additional storm copy. Pepper with **Rite of**

Flame and Seething Song on the appropriate turn to ramp to nine mana and jack the storm count.

The goal is to hit four copies of **Dragonstorm** (or more if you can), with the ideal being four **Bogardan Hellkites** each hitting the opponent with 187 effects for 20. Because you can draw a Hellkite and **Dragonstorm** isn't **Tooth and Nail**, the deck has to play additional Dragons; the eminently castable **Hunted Dragon** provides a proxy (swing for six instead of 187 for five), and it isn't actually that hard to set up storm for six to hit for about thirty-two in a single turn.

Instead of one of the many similar **Dragonstorm** lists that actually showed up at Champs, here is a very different look at the card by Pro Tour great Akira Asahara. Akira came in second at the Japanese Lord of Magic tournament a few weeks ago. His deck incorporates a heavier suspend theme and the heretofore unseen **Clockspinning**. Notice how **Clockspinning** can play **Time Walk** with a Lotus and jack the storm count!



Akira Asahara – 2nd Place 2006 Lord of Magic	
Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Flagstones of Trokair 2 Hallowed Fountain 3 Island 3 Mountain 2 Sacred Foundry 4 Shivan Reef 4 Steam Vents <hr/> 22 lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Ancestral Vision 3 Chromatic Star 3 Clockspinning 4 Dragonstorm 4 Lotus Bloom 3 Remand 4 Rite of Flame 4 Seething Song <hr/> 29 other spells
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Bogardan Hellkite 3 Greater Gargadon 1 Hunted Dragon 1 Niv-Mizzet, the Firemind <hr/> 9 creatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Clockspinning 4 Giant Solifuge 1 Greater Gargadon 2 Lightning Angel 4 Restore Balance 3 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir <hr/> 15 sideboard cards

Akira's sideboard has a Gargadon / **Restore Balance** transformation (don't forget those **Flagstones of Trokair**). There were a couple of decks in North America Champs *entirely* keyed on this combo... Akira mixes up the time-delayed **Upheaval** + **Psychatog**—reminiscent combo with his fourth **Clockspinning**.

G/W Ghazi-Glare

The vast majority of the successful Ghazi-Glare decks of this year's Champs were straight lifts from the King's Games Standard tournament in Kobe we talked about last week. While much of the analysis section talked about why Ghazi-Glare might not be the right deck to play as the metagame matures, there is no arguing with the raw success of the deck both in terms of numbers and first place finishes.




First, the basics: **Glare of Subdual** might not be *quite* **Opposition**, but with **Selesnya Guildmage**, **Vitu-Ghazi**, the **City-Tree**, and newcomer **Thelonite Hermit**, it comes close enough for most creature decks. For his part, **Thelonite Hermit** is a **Crusade** for Saprolings, "a 9/9" creature, and five **Icy Manipulators** in a shootout. Any creature, token or otherwise, is what **Glare of Subdual** wants to break **The Firestorm Principle**, and with reprint **Call of the Herd** in the mix as well, the Glare decks have the tools to break it in bulk.

The current Standard plays in three stages, the last of which is dominated by two cards: **Akroma**, **Angel of Wrath** and **Demonfire**. The success of Ghazi-Glare is in large part contingent on the deck's ability to stifle the opponents' endgames. **Loxodon Hierarch** (especially combined with fleeing femme **Saffi Eriksdotter**) can take a big chunk out of the last nail in the coffin **Demonfire**. Some Glare decks run a singleton **Akroma** along with **Chord of Calling** or **Congregation at Dawn**, all of them can tap that juggernaut down, at least in the short term.

Ultimately, the ability of Glare to compete has to do with speed. It is not the fastest beatdown deck, but given mana, Glare can produce an offense capable of winning in two to three turns once its game is set. It is not the best control deck, but the key tools on 2 can buy the time necessarily to keep the opponent out of his trump zone. A single **Loxodon Hierarch** will even stave off a lethal **Dragonstorm**

combination on four copies, and when **Glare of Subdual** hits... you have some frustrated flyers and one seething loser of an opponent ("But I went off!").

Jeremy Burt		1st Place - Colorado		txt 	
Main Deck		Sideboard			
60 cards					
4 Brushland	4 Call of the Herd	3 Circle of Protection: Red			
2 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Glare of Subdual	3 Krosan Grip			
5 Forest	3 Stonewood Invocation	4 Spike Feeder			
1 Pendelhaven		2 Thrill of the Hunt			
1 Plains	11 other spells	3 Tormod's Crypt			
3 Selesnya Sanctuary					
4 Temple Garden					
3 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree					
23 lands		15 sideboard cards			
4 Llanowar Elves					
4 Loxodon Hierarch					
3 Scryb Ranger					
4 Selesnya Guildmage					
4 Spectral Force					
3 Thelonite Hermit					
4 Yavimaya Dryad					
26 creatures					

Jeremy Burt took first place at his Champs with this update to Ghazi-Glare. I chose this version not just for his couldn't-be-better finish, but because instead of *just* lifting Kai's deck, he mixed it up with two cards that are great with one another, great in context, and great with glare: **Spectral Force** and **Scryb Ranger**. **Scryb Ranger** untaps **Spectral Force**. **Scryb Ranger** *also* untaps someone to re-tap for Glare or for tap-and-swing offense. The subtle bonus is that **Spectral Force** is awesome against Rakdos, and Rakdos is awesome against Glare decks! Sure, the **Scryb Ranger** is never going to live through a **Shadow Guildmage**, but Rakdos is the one deck where **Spectral Force** doesn't need the help. Any Saproling will allow the big man to dodge **Cruel Edict**, but it takes *some* burn spells for Rakdos to dodge dead in three.

KarstenBot BabyKiller

Joshua Miller		1st Place - Montana		txt 	
Main Deck		Sideboard			
61 cards					
2 Mouth of Ronom	4 Call of the Herd	3 Blood Moon			
4 Scrying Sheets	4 Cryoclasm	4 Giant Solifuge			
8 Snow-Covered Forest	4 Demonfire	3 Skred			
6 Snow-Covered Mountain	4 Stone Rain	2 Stalking Yeti			
4 Stomping Ground	3 Stormbind	3 Tormod's Crypt			
24 lands	19 other spells	15 sideboard cards			
4 Birds of Paradise					
3 Boreal Druid					
3 Llanowar Elves					
4 Ohran Viper					
2 Rumbling Slum					
2 Stalking Yeti					
18 creatures					

When I originally conceived of this deck, it was a port of Japanese [8StoneRain_dec](#), but incorporating **Skred**. **Scrying Sheets** made up for the loss of blue. Players have de-emphasized the Snow theme to one degree or another, so for the Champs counts, I grouped together both Snow and non-Snow decks. Anyway, all the decks of this order want to go first-turn mana accelerator, second-turn **Cryoclasm** or **Stone Rain**. Most have gone to **Rumbling Slum** for offense, and most have also borrowed **Stormbind** from 1995.

My main objection to the viability of this onetime favorite deck was the inability to deal with a turn-four **Akroma, Angel of Wrath** (**Skred**, for one mana, kills *almost* anything... but not her). Joshua played three **Tormod's Crypts** to solve this. It's unlikely for a Solar Flare or U/W deck to be able to pay retail against a functioning KarstenBot

BabyKiller, and **Tormod's Crypt** in play will consistently prevent the discount on **Zombify**, **Resurrection**, or **Dread Return**. Well done, again.

Proclamation Decks

These are a cool new suite of white decks to come out of *Coldsnap*. You will see various different builds with UrzaTron, Snow Engine, or splashes for black or red finishers. For this example I chose Rickard Hedlund's from Manitoba on pedigree (he was the only Champs Champ this year):

Rickard Hedlund		1st Place - Manitoba	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Mouth of Ronom 4 Scrying Sheets 16 Snow-Covered Plains <hr/> 24 lands 3 Adarkar Valkyrie 3 Children of Korlis 2 Chronosavant 4 Martyr of Sands <hr/> 12 creatures	4 Coldsteel Heart 4 Condemn 2 Debtors' Knell 4 Faith's Fetters 3 Proclamation of Rebirth 3 Story Circle 4 Wrath of God <hr/> 24 other spells	3 Circle of Protection: Red 3 Disenchant 3 Ivory Mask 3 Jester's Scepter 3 Tormod's Crypt <hr/> 15 sideboard cards	

Regardless of mana engine, the Proclamation decks have a couple of key cards: **Martyr of Sands** and **Proclamation of Rebirth**. Together these represent a life gain engine of tremendous frustration for the opponent. Every turn the white mage forecasts **Proclamation of Rebirth** to get back the Martyr, inevitably revealing more and more cards to stunt the opponent's offense. **Children of Korlis** can proxy the Martyr, not actually getting ahead, but providing a **Kami of False Hope**-like recursive effect.

Many versions also use **Weathered Wayfarer** to set up their engines. Like the Martyr and Children, **Weathered Wayfarer** can serve as a never-ending nuisance, and actually generate real card advantage, assembling the UrzaTron or finding that key **Mouth of Ronom**.

Solar Flare

Arguably the most popular deck in Standard, this macro archetype's numbers would probably have been even bigger if not for its spawn, Solar Pox.

Kyle Boggemes		1st Place - Michigan	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
1 Adarkar Wastes 2 Azorius Chancery 2 Caves of Koilos 2 Flagstones of Trokair 3 Godless Shrine 1 Hallowed Fountain 1 Island 1 Orzhov Basilica 2 Plains 3 Swamp 2 Underground River 1 Urza's Factory 2 Watery Grave <hr/> 23 lands 1 Adarkar Valkyrie 2 Akroma, Angel of Wrath 3 Angel of Despair 3 Court Hussar 2 Skeletal Vampire <hr/> 11 creatures	3 Azorius Signet 4 Compulsive Research 2 Dimir Signet 1 Dread Return 3 Mortify 2 Persecute 1 Phyrexian Totem 4 Remand 4 Wrath of God 2 Zombify <hr/> 26 other spells	4 Castigate 3 Circle of Protection: Red 4 Condemn 1 Persecute 3 Sacred Ground <hr/> 15 sideboard cards	

While you can make the argument that father Solar Flare is the outmoded Neanderthal Man of the two decks, the incentives between the hot new thing and old man are different. Solar Flare has **Remand**. **Remand** isn't a hard counter but it's probably still on the short list for the best spell in Standard. Against the top red decks, especially the multi-dimensional ones, **Persecute** is an important tool that Solar Pox typically doesn't play (I know I wouldn't have lost a match at Champs but for the well-aimed **Persecute**!). Finally, Solar Flare's offense allows for a more robust array of threats. You can't argue with the panache of Solar Pox, but there really is something to be said for that second – or even third – **Skeletal Vampire**!

Solar Pox

Definite It! Girl! of Champs 2006, Solar Pox took all of one week to go from nobody to Number Two.

This deck is all about synergy. It has most of the tools of older brother Solar Flare, but runs an internally powerful early game that almost can't be matched by any other deck in the format. Imagine there was a card that cost **♣♣** and destroyed the opponent's land. Oh, there is?

What if it destroyed the opponent's land, caused him to discard, *and* showed his man an Edict... *while at the same time turning on your draw engine*? Because of **Flagstones of Trokair**, there is almost no downside to **Smallpox**, and with **Haakon, Stromgald Scourge** and creatures that would rather be reanimated than hard cast (sevens and eights), this spell is anything but traditionally symmetrical.

If you have never heard of this deck, catch up. You'll need to. Here is the version onetime Pro Tour great Jeff Fung ran at his Champs:



Jeff Fung		2nd Place - British Columbia	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
1 Dimir Aqueduct	4 Compulsive Research	4 Castigate	
4 Flagstones of Trokair	3 Condemn	3 Circle of Protection: Red	
2 Gemstone Mine	3 Dread Return	1 Faith's Fetters	
2 Ghost Quarter	3 Mortify	1 Haakon, Stromgald Scourge	
4 Godless Shrine	3 Orzhov Signet	3 Persecute	
2 Hallowed Fountain	1 Phyrexian Totem	3 Shadow of Doubt	
1 Island	4 Smallpox		
1 Orzhov Basilica	4 Wrath of God		
1 Plains			15 sideboard cards
2 Swamp	25 other spells		
4 Watery Grave			
24 lands			
2 Akroma, Angel of Wrath			
2 Angel of Despair			
4 Court Hussar			
2 Haakon, Stromgald Scourge			
1 Skeletal Vampire			
11 creatures			

Look for Solar Pox to grow up to be the most popular deck in the format for at least a time.

U/G Scryb & Force

Quietly differentiating itself from "regular" U/G Aggro (see last week's [Swimming with Sharks](#)), which is largely based on the Dutch Simic Aggro deck from the Netherlands Top 8, Scryb & Force is specifically borrowed from Naoki Shimizu in the Top 8 of the Lord of Magic tournament.

Scrub and Force		Naoki Shimizu, Lord of Magic Top 8	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Breeding Pool	4 Call of the Herd	3 Krosan Grip	
3 Forest	4 Psionic Blast	2 Loaming Shaman	

1 Island	4 Remand	1 Mystic Snake
1 Pendelhaven	3 Stonewood Invocation	4 Repeal
5 Snow-Covered Forest		2 Serrated Arrows
1 Snow-Covered Island	15 other spells	3 Trygon Predator
4 Yavimaya Coast		15 sideboard cards
19 lands		
4 Birds of Paradise		
4 Llanowar Elves		
3 Mystic Snake		
4 Plaxmanta		
4 Scryb Ranger		
3 Spectral Force		
4 Yavimaya Dryad		
26 creatures		

This little – and quite big – dynamo of a deck plays only nineteen (!) lands, but runs out the biggest and baddest offense in the format. We think of Shimizu as a Solar Flare guy, but this time around, his weapon of choice goes turn-one **Birds of Paradise** or **Llanowar Elves**, turn-two **Scryb Ranger**, turn-three **Spectral Force**! Rah!

With **Psionic Blast** and **Stonewood Invocation** to finish, this deck doesn't take very long to win.

U/W Control

There was great variation in this macro-archetype, with players running anything from post-Solar Flare two-color decks killing with Akroma, all the way to **Sacred Mesa** sit-there decks out of 1997, and every **Urza's Factory**-activation-at-end-of-turn in-between.

U/R/W decks

I split these decks out into four distinct groups because, though they share **Lightning Helixes**, they don't share game plans.

U/R/W Beatdown: This is basically Boros Deck Wins with Blue.

U/R/W Firemane Angel Control: Modern interpretations of “the classic,” this deck is keyed on Kamiel's Top 16 deck from [Pro Tour – Honolulu](#). It is almost a true control deck, with **Compulsive Research** and/or **Careful Consideration** dumping the **Firemane Angel**, sometimes using the life gain to break **Zur's Weirding**. This sub-archetype is distinguished by the presence of both **Wrath of God** and counterspells.

U/R/W Resurrection: This version is very “Solar Flare” in flavor, hybridizing **Firemane Angel** Control elements with the minor reanimation suite of Solar Flare. Of course you have **Akroma, Angel of Wrath** (major distinguishing feature, along with **Resurrection**), and the draw-and-dump spells are already fantastic with **Firemane Angel**. Many of these decks have their own answer to **Angel of Despair** in **Bogardan Hellkite**.

U/R/W Mid-Range: These decks play offense against control and alternately play control or purely race beatdown. I included the Pat Chapin Flag Burner decks in this group as well as the New York State Champion's deck:



Mike Flores		
1st Place - New York		txt
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
1 Adarkar Wastes	2 Azorius Signet	3 Fortune Thief
3 Boros Garrison	2 Boros Signet	4 Grand Arbiter Augustin IV
4 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Compulsive Research	4 Mana Leak
4 Hallowed Fountain	1 Confiscate	4 Repeal
2 Island	4 Demonfire	
1 Izzet Boilerworks	4 Lightning Helix	15 sideboard cards
2 Plains	4 Wrath of God	
4 Sacred Foundry		
2 Steam Vents	21 other spells	

23 lands
4 Court Hussar
4 Firemane Angel
4 Lightning Angel
4 Serra Avenger
16 creatures

As you can see, this deck doesn't really fit into the **Firemane Angel** Control mold despite playing **Wrath of God** (no counters) and is actually pretty offensive with **Serra Avenger** and **Lightning Angel**... *but it still plays Wrath of God!*

My former Righteous Babe teammate, the underrated mastermind Brian Kowal, built this deck. It is tuned to demolish Zoo and Rakdos, trump control with **Demonfire** and **Firemane Angel** in the long game, and beat Solar Pox at its own game with **Flagstones of Trokair** and **Firemane Angel** (who likes going to the graveyard directly from hand). A lot of people found this deck to be confusing to characterize, and even though I won New York with it, I am a bit puzzled at categorizing it myself. You may be scratching your head at some of the cards... **Wrath of God** and **Serra Avenger**?

Remember a year ago when the opponent had three guys and you tapped six for your Dragon to trump them? It's like that now, but instead you tap four to blow up all their guys and have two left to play your 3/3 Dragon.

The absolute coolest card in the deck is **Fortune Thief**. I liked Kowal's deck but was pretty sure it would lose to a resolved **Glare of Subdual**... so I thought up **Fortune Thief**. The post-sideboard game plan is to play **Fortune Thief** (99% of the time they can't kill it), and wait there until the opponent has drawn most of his deck, and then **Compulsive Research** him until he's dead. It seems silly, but very few G/W Glare decks can beat this strategy.

Zoo

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Call of the Herd	4 Cryoclash
2 Forest	4 Char	4 Fiery Justice
4 Gemstone Mine	3 Griffin Guide	3 Ronom Unicorn
4 Sacred Foundry	4 Lightning Helix	4 Stone Rain
4 Stomping Ground	4 Rift Bolt	15 sideboard cards
4 Temple Garden	19 other spells	
22 lands		
4 Kird Ape		
3 Magus of the Scroll		
4 Savannah Lions		
4 Scab-Clan Mauler		
4 Watchwolf		
19 creatures		

We started on Boros with **Griffin Guide**. We end on Zoo with **Griffin Guide**.

Zoo was the prototypical Deck to Beat prior to Champs, and in the hands of Lucas Glavin, one of America's most underrated Magical minds, it went all the way. The deck has a very similar game plan to Boros, trading bustier creatures like **Watchwolf** and an additional two power one drop for the Boros Legion's mana consistency and ability to run the mighty Garrison.

Glavin's version has a full eight 3/3 creatures for two mana (**Scab-Clan Mauler**) and a land destruction transformation (if there's one way you can reverse the nightmare matchup of **Lightning Angel** and **Lightning Helix**, it's a **Stone Rain** on the other guy's Karoo). **Fiery Justice** is really interesting, kind of like a cross between a one-sided **Wrath of God** and multiple **Swords to Plowshares**... Lucas already has **Call of the Herd** as a source of card advantage against other creature decks. **Fiery Justice** helps tip the scales even more.

Looking Forward

A year ago Standard was very clear to me. I understood it to have one clear best strategy, embraced by very few best decks. However the development agenda of Tier Two cards has



given us a brand new format with literally dozens of decks that are good enough to play... and we haven't even seen two-thirds of the *Time Spiral* Block yet! This is going to be one fun year!

Your targets are even clearer now... There are just a ton of them. Gear up. *Be the man!*

*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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