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The Best Decks in the Worlds

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After a tournament as big and important as the [2006 World Championships](#) (especially one with two out of three formats being Constructed), there is one thing that the average Swimming With Sharks reader is interested in: decklists!

The World Champion's Deck: Dragonstorm

First thing's first, the 2006 World Champion:

Makahito Mihara
2006 World Champion

txt

Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Calciform Pools 1 Dreadship Reef 8 Island 4 Mountain 4 Shivan Reef 4 Steam Vents 22 lands 4 Bogardan Hellkite 2 Hunted Dragon 6 creatures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Dragonstorm 4 Gigadrowse 4 Lotus Bloom 4 Remand 4 Rite of Flame 4 Seething Song 4 Sleight of Hand 4 Telling Time 32 other spells
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Calciform Pools 2 Dreadship Reef 3 Ignorant Bliss 3 Pyroclasm 4 Repeal 1 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir 1 Trickbind 15 sideboard cards

The incentive for **Dragonstorm** is to hit nine mana on about turn four for one of the fastest clocks in Standard. The method in this deck is by incremental short-term mana acceleration (**Lotus Bloom**, **Rite of Flame**, and **Seething Song**). That nine mana is used to play the namesake card, **Dragonstorm**. Conveniently, a **Lotus Bloom** suspended on the first turn will end up played on turn four. Along with a **Seething Song**, a **Rite of Flame**, and some land drops, you should be able to play four Dragons... If they are **Bogardan Hellkites**, that is 20 to the head! **Hunted Dragon** is present in this deck for two reasons: One: At higher storm count, you want to be able to deal more damage (here haste to deal 6 instead of comes into play to deal 5), and two: Sometimes you draw a Hellkite.

The Decks to Beat: Boros and U/W 'Tron

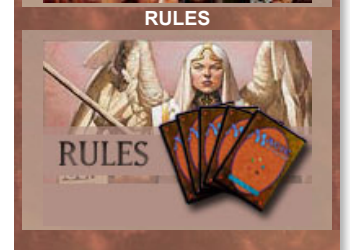
Dragonstorm may have won the main event, but from where I sit, the two big decks of the tournament that you need to prepare for – or even copy – are Boros Deck Wins and U/W 'Tron.

Boros was among the most played decks of the World Championships (it was the second most popular deck [last year](#), too), and clearly the top performer, statistically. Of the five undefeated decks on Day One, four of them were Boros Deck Wins variants.


Willy Edel, 6-0
Standard – 2006 World Championships

txt

Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Battlefield Forge 3 Boros Garrison 3 Flagstones of Trokair 2 Gemstone Mine 4 Sacred Foundry 2 Snow-Covered Mountain 3 Snow-Covered Plains 16 other spells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Char 4 Lightning Helix 4 Rift Bolt 4 Volcanic Hammer 4 Cryoclastm 3 Honorable Passage 2 Paladin en-Vec 4 Ronom Unicorn 2 Worship 15 sideboard cards



21 lands
4 Giant Solifuge 4 Icatian Javelineers 4 Knight of the Holy Nimbus 4 Savannah Lions 3 Scorched Rusalka 4 Soltari Priest
23 creatures

Paulo Vitor Damo da Rosa			Standard – 2006 World Championships Top 8		txt 	
Main Deck			Sideboard			
60 cards						
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Char		4 Cryoclast			
3 Boros Garrison	4 Lightning Helix		3 Honorable Passage			
3 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Rift Bolt		2 Paladin en-Vec			
2 Gemstone Mine	4 Volcanic Hammer		4 Ronom Unicorn			
2 Mountain			2 Worship			
3 Plains	16 other spells			15 sideboard cards		
4 Sacred Foundry						
21 lands						
4 Giant Solifuge						
4 Icatian Javelineers						
4 Knight of the Holy Nimbus						
4 Savannah Lions						
3 Scorched Rusalka						
4 Soltari Priest						
23 creatures						

Raala Pumba teammates from the [Pro Tour – Charleston](#) Finals Willy Edel and Paulo Vitor Damo da Rosa backed up their Constructed reputations with outstanding 6-0 finishes on Day One. Their versions of Boros are identical, save Edel's tricking it up with Snow-Covered basic lands.

Like all Boros Deck Wins versions, these attack early with white beaters to pull the opponent into burn range and then finish with one of 16 red direct damage spells. In Boros, your creatures are essentially burn spells that help knock down the opponent's life total, not to be treated "expressly" as creatures, as with most other decks. If you can get in four with a first-turn **Savannah Lions** with Boros, you should be pretty ecstatic.

The unique elements of this version are red creatures **Scorched Rusalka** and **Giant Solifuge**. The Rusalka pushes the whole "my creatures are faux burn spells" to its furthest logical conclusion of *actually* burning the opponent down with them, and **Giant Solifuge** is just a mislabeled burn spell anyway. Together these two cards are some of the best tools Boros has against the hated **Faith's Fetters** (see below).

Tsuyoshi Fujita, 6-0			Standard – 2006 World Championships Top 8		txt 	
Main Deck			Sideboard			
60 cards						
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Char		4 Cloudchaser Kestrel			
4 Flagstones of Trokair	3 Demonfire		3 Giant Solifuge			
4 Gemstone Mine	4 Lightning Helix		2 Honorable Passage			
1 Godless Shrine	4 Rift Bolt		4 Paladin en-Vec			
3 Mountain	4 Seal of Fire		2 Rain of Gore			
4 Plains	4 Volcanic Hammer			15 sideboard cards		
4 Sacred Foundry	23 other spells					
24 lands						
4 Icatian Javelineers						
1 Knight of the Holy Nimbus						
4 Savannah Lions						
4 Soltari Priest						
13 creatures						

This article features decks from three of my favorite deck designers. Of those three, Tsuyoshi is probably my overall favorite due to his flashes of awesomeness with beatdown. Anyone can work and work on control (and sometimes combination) decks, which have all kinds of margin like card drawing and deck manipulation feeding their elegance, or more room to explore fun ideas, but it takes a true master to whittle the beatdown into its most efficient possible shape. As Tsuyoshi's take is so *different* but still effective, I can forgive the personal insult of no **Boros Garrisons** in this deck (the other three lists featured in this article all played 3 Garrisons among 21 lands); Fujita instead elected to jump up to 24 lands. To realize what a maverick move that is (you might not realize it because *most* decks play 24 lands), this is the guy who basically *invented* 20-21 lands in *Ravnica* Block-enabled Boros and Zoo decks, as well as the 20/20/20 split!

Tsuyoshi's version packs a mere thirteen creatures (I mean, he had to get those extra lands from *somewhere*) but 23 burn spells, including the second best card in Standard, **Demonfire**. A subtle twist lurks in Fujita's sideboard: two copies of **Rain of Gore** that he can run on his one **Godless Shrine** (fetched with double **Flagstones of Trokair**) and four **Gemstone Mines**; **Rain of Gore** is a more blunt and more broad look at the Rusalka and Solifuge, and clearly more powerful against **Loxodon Hierarch** (the best card that no one plays any more) and **Firemane Angel**. I also think Tsuyoshi has the strongest sideboard of the group overall as he has four **Cloudchaser Kestrels**, which both destroy **Circle of Protection: Red** (and other annoying enchantments, but mostly **Circle of Protection: Red**) and offer an evasive white source of damage.

All these Boros decks had the same Standard record, so you can't really gauge one being better than the other based on, say, Paulo making Top 8 versus Tsuyoshi finishing 10th. However if there is one with any additional edge, you have to give it to Welsh National Team member Nicholas Lovett, who not only ran the 6-0 start but got a win in the Top 8, over then-reigning World Champion and Japanese National Champion Katsuhiko Mori, no less! We often talk about the mythical "best version of the best deck" being the version of the (almost as mythical) "best deck" that can beat *itself*. If Boros is the best deck – and it looks like it might be – then Nicholas Lovett's version, which got the seventh win (tied for highest *in the tournament*), is perhaps the zenith of present day development.



Nicholas Lovett		Standard – 2006 World Championships Top 8	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Char	2 Cryoclash	
3 Boros Garrison	4 Lightning Helix	3 Honorable Passage	
4 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Rift Bolt	3 Pacifism	
2 Mountain	4 Volcanic Hammer	2 Paladin en-Vec	
4 Plains		1 Ronom Unicorn	
4 Sacred Foundry	16 other spells	4 Stone Rain	
21 lands		15 sideboard cards	
4 Icatian Javelineers 4 Knight of the Holy Nimbus 1 Magus of the Scroll 2 Ronom Unicorn 4 Savannah Lions 4 Soltari Priest 4 Wildfire Emissary 23 creatures			

What makes this deck strategically any better than any other? I mean, Tsuyoshi threw in an extra 7 copies of **Seal of Fire** and **Demonfire**, but everyone else had the exact same 16 burn spells. The secret weapons, I think, are Nicholas's unusual Wildfire Emissaries. This was a card that was It! Girl! of Pro Tour – Dallas way back when **Swords to Plowshares** and **Lightning Bolt** were the standard for Standard elimination spells... If the default beatdown deck is all white creatures, **Wildfire Emissary** may be even better now than it was in 1996.

Given the small amount of testing I've done so far, my belief is that Lovett's deck doesn't have any problems hitting four mana. Unlike the other undefeated Boros builds, he doesn't eat his own lands with **Gemstone Mine**. The Emissaries run past other White creatures, and are pretty hard to kill. You can take one out with a **Char**, but not a **Condemn** or **Temporal Isolation**, meaning that you will usually get your mana's worth if you pump the Emissary to the max on offense. If another Boros deck wants to burn the big 2/4 down, he'll need **Volcanic Hammer** and **Rift Bolt** because, subtly, **Lightning Helix** doesn't quite do the job, or even help.

The other macro archetype that will have the biggest impact on Standard will definitely be U/W 'Tron. Itaru Ishida rounded out the undefeated Day One players with a Teferi and **Triskelavus** version similar to the one played by quarterfinalist Katsu Mori (who got five wins himself).

Itaru Ishida, 6-0

Standard – 2006 World Championships



Main Deck

60 cards

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Academy Ruins | 4 Azorius Signet |
| 4 Adarkar Wastes | 1 Careful Consideration |
| 4 Hallowed Fountain | 1 Commandeer |
| 1 Island | 4 Compulsive Research |
| 1 Urza's Factory | 3 Dimir Signet |
| 4 Urza's Mine | 3 Faith's Fetters |
| 4 Urza's Power Plant | 2 Mana Leak |
| 4 Urza's Tower | 1 Mystical Teachings |
| | 4 Remand |
| 23 lands | 2 Spell Burst |
| | 2 Spell Snare |
| 1 Draining Whelk | 2 Tidings |
| 2 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir | 3 Wrath of God |
| 2 Triskelavus | |
| | 32 other spells |
| 5 creatures | |

Sideboard

- | |
|-----------------------------|
| 3 Annex |
| 1 Bottle Gnomes |
| 2 Circle of Protection: Red |
| 3 Jester's Scepter |
| 1 Return to Dust |
| 2 Serrated Arrows |
| 1 Spell Snare |
| 1 Trickbind |
| 1 Wrath of God |
| 15 sideboard cards |

Katsuhiro Mori

Standard – 2006 World Championships Top 8



Main Deck

60 cards

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Academy Ruins | 4 Azorius Signet |
| 4 Adarkar Wastes | 1 Careful Consideration |
| 4 Hallowed Fountain | 1 Commandeer |
| 1 Island | 4 Compulsive Research |
| 1 Urza's Factory | 3 Dimir Signet |
| 4 Urza's Mine | 2 Faith's Fetters |
| 4 Urza's Power Plant | 2 Mana Leak |
| 4 Urza's Tower | 1 Mystical Teachings |
| | 4 Remand |
| 23 lands | 2 Spell Burst |
| | 2 Spell Snare |
| 2 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir | 2 Think Twice |
| 2 Triskelavus | 2 Tidings |
| | 3 Wrath of God |
| 4 creatures | 33 other spells |

Sideboard

- | |
|-----------------------------|
| 3 Annex |
| 2 Circle of Protection: Red |
| 1 Draining Whelk |
| 1 Faith's Fetters |
| 3 Jester's Scepter |
| 1 Remove Soul |
| 1 Return to Dust |
| 1 Spell Snare |
| 1 Trickbind |
| 1 Wrath of God |
| 15 sideboard cards |

This deck is powerful and versatile. Any deck with the 'Tron is probably not optimally consistent in the abstract but makes up for that fact by being able to muscle the opponent into the ground with a massive mana advantage once out of the early game. As with the 'Tron decks we've seen in the past, the Japanese TriscuitTron stalls early with Signets into **Remand** then moves in for the power cards late game.



Once the 'tron is online, TriscuitTron can lock the game completely out with **Spell Burst**. It has early plays with **Spell Snare** and can snap the table in two with **Wrath of God**. Some of those singletons hurt as well. You may have read in the [Worlds blog](#) that my protégé Josh Ravitz sculpted the (allegedly inexorable) hellbent **Demonfire**, only to lose to Shuuhei Nakamura's maindeck **Commandeer**. Ouch. On the subject of singletons, the **Dimir Signets** actually make sense in this deck (off-color Signets make sense in about one in four 'Tron decks)... They can pay the flashback on the lone **Mystical Teachings**.

The endgame for TriscuitTron is mostly **Triskelavus**. This creature is what passes for a bomb monolith in post-Kamigawa Block Standard. It isn't **Keiga**, and it costs quite a bit of mana, but once online, **Triskelavus** does a passable job of controlling the board, due to its ability to split off into many skydivers. This probably isn't incentive enough, though... But when **Triskelavus** dies in TriscuitTron, as an artifact creature, it can loop over and over with the one **Academy Ruins**, littering the game with Mogg Fanatics.

U/W 'Tron is everything that Boros isn't. Where Boros is straightforward aggression, U/W 'Tron is methodical. Where Boros is redundant, 'Tron is tricky. Some of them are *really* tricky, in fact.

Gabriel Nassif



Standard – 2006 Worlds Championships Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Adarkar Wastes	4 Azorius Signet	3 Circle of Protection: Red
2 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Compulsive Research	3 Disenchant
4 Hallowed Fountain	3 Condemn	1 Evangelize
1 Plains	1 Dizzy Spell	2 Faith's Fetters
1 Urza's Factory	1 Muse Vessel	1 Mimeofacture
4 Urza's Mine	4 Proclamation of Rebirth	2 Muse Vessel
4 Urza's Power Plant	4 Remand	1 Vesuva
4 Urza's Tower	2 Spell Burst	1 Weathered Wayfarer
	4 Wrath of God	1 Whispers of the Muse
24 lands		
	27 other spells	15 sideboard cards
2 Chronosavant		
4 Martyr of Sands		
3 Weathered Wayfarer		
9 creatures		

Gab is one of my other favorite deck designers, and was my call for 2006 World Champion. His deck is one of the finest solutions to a metagame in recent memory, and painful – excruciating – to play... *against*.

The key to this version of U/W 'Tron is that it skews white instead of blue. Instead of triple-blue Teferi, Gab splices the "Snow White" **Proclamation of Rebirth** engine onto his 'Tron engine. MartyrTron is a strong hybrid because it adds an additional powerful (in-format) theme (Martyr) onto an actually busted mana configuration. MartyrTron essentially graduates the already viable **Martyr of Sands** / **Proclamation of Rebirth** decks to *great*.

We already know how the 'Tron side works. Once you have a massive mana engine, it isn't hard to do something absurd with it. If you missed past episodes of *Swimming with Sharks*, this is how the **Proclamation** side works:

Martyr of Sands is a real problem for beatdown decks, **Dragonstorm**, and many threat-poor control decks. With eight mana, **Proclamation of Rebirth** allows Nassif to forecast up the Martyr and sacrifice it once per turn. Once Nassif is gaining 9+ life per loop, the opponent has to commit a lot of resources to do any damage at all. Then Gab springs the **Wrath of God** to start again.

Weathered Wayfarer, **Proclamation of Rebirth**, and **Martyr of Sands** are all inexorable sources of utility, and in some cases, card advantage. Blue decks can't really stop them with permission... but they don't win the game. That's where **Chronosavant** comes in. This card is a fine solution to **Smallpox** in the short term, and a 5/5 beater when he needs to be. However there are many potential end game creatures. The unique element of **Chronosavant** in a deck as glacial as this one is actually activating it multiple times without passing priority to skip multiple turns so that the opponent decks himself!

Another Format, Another U/W 'Tron Deck

One player I was watching throughout the Worlds competition was Shaheen Soorani, whom I've mentioned in this column more than once (and who is the third of three of my favorite deck designers mentioned here). Shaheen was the odd man out, missing Top 8 on tiebreakers... but that's so "The Week That Was." From the *Swimming With Sharks* perspective, Soorani posted a solid 4-2 record in Standard and an awesome 5-0-1 in Extended.

If Boros is to be the biggest and best known deck in Standard, you might want to give Shaheen's "Blink Riders V2.0" at your next Friday Night **Magic** or **Magic Online** 8-man queue.



Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
2 Adarkar Wastes	4 Ancestral Vision	4 Cryoclash
4 Hallowed Fountain	2 Demonfire	4 Disenchant
3 Island	4 Lightning Helix	4 Faith's Fetters
2 Mountain	4 Momentary Blink	3 Rift Bolt
2 Plains		
		15 sideboard cards

4 Sacred Foundry	4 Remand
2 Shivan Reef	4 Stone Rain
4 Steam Vents	
23 lands	22 other spells
4 Avalanche Riders	
4 Court Hussar	
4 Lightning Angel	
3 Riftwing Cloudskate	
15 creatures	



This deck is all 187 and haste creatures and **Momentary Blink**. Shaheen could win on tempo with **Stone Rain** and **Avalanche Riders**, or on relentless card advantage. The best cards in this deck are **Lightning Angel** and – believe it or not – **Riftwing Cloudskate**. “I only played three because I didn’t know *how* amazing it was,” Shaheen told me... “But three is a good number.” There are all kinds of cute tricks you can play to cheat in this deck. Echo might be on the stack and you conveniently Blink **Avalanche Riders**. You credit card the echo for a turn, still have a man who can attack, and nuke a second land.

According to Soorani, this deck has no legitimate bad matchups in the metagame. He beat two Boros decks, regular Glare, and the Norwegian B/W deck, losing to a “terrible” U/R LD / burn deck with **Sulfurous Blast**, **Demonfire**, and **Browbeat**, and a Glare deck with four **Demonfires**.

A natural question with a deck like this one is, when, if ever, you Blink a **Court Hussar**.

“I Blinked him at least once per match. You can cantrip a dead Blink or search for the **Demonfire**.”

Overall, Blink Riders V2.0 is a blowout deck against Boros and about 55/45 against Tron (“It’s favorable if you go first.”) The Tron matchup gets better after boards when you add **Disenchant** and **Cryoclasm** for more mana denial... But if **Dragonstorm** picks up after Mihara’s victory, that isn’t good for this deck. “You can only really win by beating them down, or maybe manascrewing them... Keep getting those haste creatures in there!”

The real story of Shaheen’s deck choices has got to be his U/W Extended deck.

Shaheen Soorani, 5-0-1		Extended – 2006 World Championships	
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
1 Academy Ruins	4 Azorius Signet	4 Meddling Mage	
1 Adarkar Wastes	4 Condescend	3 Sphere of Law	
4 Hallowed Fountain	3 Decree of Justice	3 Sun Droplet	
3 Island	4 Fact or Fiction	3 Tormod's Crypt	
2 Plains	3 Mindslaver	2 Trickbind	
4 Urza's Mine	4 Remand	15 sideboard cards	
4 Urza's Power Plant	2 Renewed Faith		
4 Urza's Tower	3 Repeal		
23 lands	1 Talisman of Progress		
	3 Wrath of God		
	31 other spells		
2 Eternal Dragon			
2 Exalted Angel			
2 Solemn Simulacrum			
6 creatures			

Swimming With Sharks started covering Shaheen’s adventures with U/W decks more than two years ago. He qualifies seemingly every season with the same deck, and last year, when he won a Honolulu PTQ at Grand Prix Philadelphia, even picked up the brilliant Chris Manning (who was himself coming off a US Nationals Top 8) as an adherent.

“I finally got to play the deck in a tournament other than a PTQ!”

Shaheen rode the deck, which he thinks is tops in the format, to 5-0 but chose to draw against eventual champ Mihara in the final round. This drew Shaheen *out* of Top 8, and put Mihara into the spot that he took to become the eventual World Champion.

"I got a bad scout. Very bad. My friend told me he was Boros. Boros is a true 50/50 matchup, and I didn't want to walk away with only \$2,000, and I was Top 8 if Nassif lost, or if Willy Edel won... So I drew."

Mihara, though, was not playing Boros, but The CAL, his innovative deck from the last Extended season.

"That matchup is so easy it's hard to explain why. They cycle some lands, Therapy some, maybe resolve a **Dark Confidant**. You play the 'tron, search, **Fact or Fiction**, then cycle Decree or **Mindslaver** them. Confinement doesn't matter... you have **Remand**, **Repeal**, and **Condescend**. Then after board, four **Meddling Mages**!

"It sucked to miss Top 8 with the best deck, but this is obviously my best finish ever."

"What about the friend who gave you the bad scout? Are you going to disown him?" I asked.

"Already done."



*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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