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# Ending Block-on-Block Violence

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 Latest Developments  
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*This article discusses the one significant development shift that I'm most proud to have worked on. Blocks like Onslaught and Mirrodin really encouraged "self-contained" decks, but recently we've worked hard to make sure Standard decks are made of parts from all of the format's component blocks. Check it out.*

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As we finish working on one block here in R&D and begin working on the next, we often have discussions about what Standard will lose when the new set rotates in (knocking out the block two previous), and what the new block will want to do to compensate. Will red be lacking good small creature? Is the best countermagic leaving? Will colors other than green lose their ability to accelerate? Basically we want to make sure things never get too out of whack.

In these discussions, we sometimes talk about what the "ideal" Standard deck should look like. Not what colors it is or whether it wins fast or slow, but rather where its cards come from.

Take a look at the following four decks, which happen to be the top four finishers from the 2004 World Championships.

### Green-White Slide

Julian Nuijten – 2004 World Champion

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Secluded Steppe 4 Tranquil Thicket 4 Windswept Heath 6 Plains 7 Forest <hr/> 25 lands <hr/> 4 Viridian Shaman 4 Eternal Witness 4 Eternal Dragon <hr/> 12 creatures	4 Wrath of God 4 Renewed Faith 4 Astral Slide 2 Akroma's Vengeance 2 Decree of Justice 1 Plow Under 2 Wing Shards 4 Rampant Growth <hr/> 23 other spells	4 Oxidize 2 Rude Awakening 3 Scrabbling Claws 3 Circle of Protection: Red 3 Plow Under <hr/> 15 sideboard cards

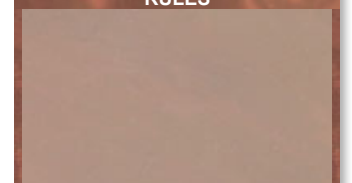
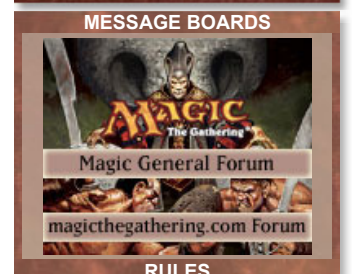
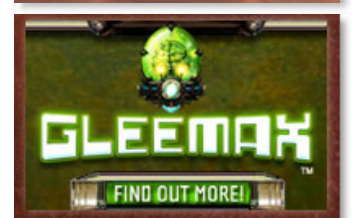
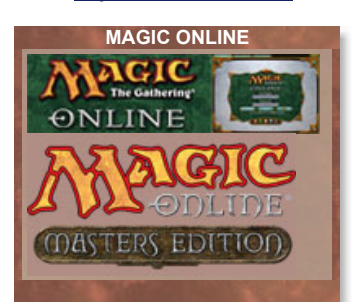
### Affinity

Aeo Paquette – 2004 Worlds Finalist

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Seat of the Synod 4 Vault of Whispers 4 Great Furnace 3 Blinkmoth Nexus 3 Glimmervoid <hr/> 18 lands <hr/> 4 Ornithopter 4 Arcbound Ravager 4 Arcbound Worker 4 Disciple of the Vault 2 Somber Hoverguard 4 Frogmite <hr/> 22 creatures	4 Chrome Mox 4 Thoughtcast 4 Welding Jar 4 Shrapnel Blast 4 Cranial Plating <hr/> 20 other spells	4 Furnace Dragon 4 Seething Song 3 Serum Visions 4 Annul <hr/> 15 sideboard cards



[Final Wrap-up Top 8 Video Archives](#)





### Goblins

Ryo Ogura – 2004 Worlds Semifinalist

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
19 Mountain	4 Electrostatic Bolt	4 Relic Barrier
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 other spells	3 Sulfuric Vortex
23 lands		2 Gempalm Incinerator
4 Sparksmith		2 Arc-Slogger
4 Skirk Prospector		2 Sword of Fire and Ice
4 Goblin Sledder		2 Goblin Charbelcher
4 Goblin Piledriver		15 sideboard cards
4 Goblin Warchief		
4 Goblin Sharpshooter		
4 Clickslither		
3 Siege-Gang Commander		
2 Gempalm Incinerator		
33 creatures		

### Ironworks

Manuel Bevand – 2004 Worlds Semifinalist

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
3 Tree of Tales	4 Krark-Clan Ironworks	4 Mana Leak
2 Ancient Den	3 Talisman of Dominance	4 Furnace Dragon
2 Vault of Whispers	1 Fireball	4 Seething Song
4 Seat of the Synod	1 Goblin Charbelcher	3 Pyroclasm
4 Great Furnace	4 Chrome Mox	15 sideboard cards
4 Darksteel Citadel	3 Fabricate	
19 lands	4 Myr Incubator	
0 creatures	4 Pentad Prism	
	4 Condescend	
	3 Serum Visions	
	4 Thoughtcast	
	3 Thirst for Knowledge	
	3 Talisman of Progress	
	41 other spells	

Bring back memories? The format was Standard using the full *Onslaught* block, the full *Mirrodin* block, and *Eighth Edition*. Looking back on these decks now, it is clear to me that these are prime examples of what the “ideal” Standard deck is *not*.

Why not? Here are some numbers.

WORLDS 2004	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Nuijten - GW Slide ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	30	8	9	64% / 17% / 19%	9	2	3	64% / 14% / 21%
Paquette - Affinity ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	0	60	0	0% / 100% / 0%	0	16	0	0% / 100% / 0%
Ogura - Goblins ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	33	8	0	80% / 20% / 0%	9	2	0	82% / 18% / 0%
Bevand - Ironworks ( <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Mirrodin</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	0	60	0	0% / 100% / 0%	0	19	0	0% / 100% / 0%


A few quick notes on this and the following tables: The total number of “cards” looked at includes neither basic lands nor sideboards. If a card is in an expansion and the Core Set at the same time (think *Shatter*), it is counted for the Core Set. A “unique” card can be thought of as a line on a decklist and has nothing to do with the number of any particular card played.


From a development standpoint, this analysis is painful to look at. The Affinity and Ironworks decks are quite literally Block decks—neither of them get so much as a single card from the other Standard-legal sets. The other two may as well be Block decks with a few minor tweaks; if you recall, Goblins and *Astral Slide* were two of the premier powerhouses in the *Onslaught* Block environment.

Those of you with experience playing *Mirrodin* cards may be quick to blame that block’s insular “doesn’t-play-nice-with-others” mechanics, but the problem is much bigger than that. Here are four high-finishing decks from

the previous year's Worlds—2003:

<b>Wake</b>		
Daniel Zink – 2003 World Champion		
<b>Main Deck</b>		<b>Sideboard</b>
60 cards		
4 Krosan Verge	4 Mana Leak	1 Vengeful Dreams
4 Skycloud Expanse	1 Circular Logic	1 Hunting Pack
4 Forest	4 Wrath of God	1 Wing Shards
4 Plains	2 Vengeful Dreams	1 Circular Logic
7 Island	3 Moment's Peace	1 Ray of Distortion
2 Flooded Strand	3 Renewed Faith	1 Renewed Faith
2 Elfhome Palace	3 Mirari's Wake	1 Krosan Reclamation
	1 Mirari	2 Exalted Angel
27 lands	4 Deep Analysis	3 Ray of Revelation
	3 Compulsion	3 Anurid Brushhopper
	3 Cunning Wish	
0 creatures	2 Decree of Justice	15 sideboard cards
	33 other spells	

<b>UG Madness</b>		
Dave Humpherys – 2003 Worlds Semifinalist		
<b>Main Deck</b>		<b>Sideboard</b>
60 cards		
11 Island	3 Roar of the Wurm	2 Nantuko Vigilante
8 Forest	4 Circular Logic	1 Ray of Revelation
1 Centaur Garden	1 Ray of Revelation	1 Deep Analysis
2 City of Brass	3 Unsummon	2 Envelop
22 lands	4 Careful Study	2 Mana Leak
	2 Deep Analysis	1 Krosan Reclamation
4 Basking Rootwalla	2 Quiet Speculation	1 Wonder
4 Aquamoeba	1 Krosan Reclamation	2 Stupefying Touch
4 Wild Mongrel	20 other spells	2 Phantom Centaur
3 Arrogant Wurm		1 Unsummon
3 Wonder		15 sideboard cards
18 creatures		

<b>Goblin Bidding</b>		
Wolfgang Eder – 2003 Worlds Top 8		
<b>Main Deck</b>		<b>Sideboard</b>
60 cards		
4 Bloodstained Mire	3 Patriarch's Bidding	1 Smother
3 Shadowblood Ridge	3 Smother	2 Cabal Therapy
4 Swamp	6 other spells	2 Flaring Pain
1 City of Brass		4 Sulfuric Vortex
10 Mountain		2 Dark Banishing
22 lands		4 Starstorm
		15 sideboard cards
2 Goblin Sharpshooter		
3 Gempalm Incinerator		
3 Skirk Prospector		
1 Goblin Grappler		
3 Goblin Taskmaster		
4 Goblin Sledder		
4 Goblin Warchief		
4 Goblin Piledriver		
4 Sparksmith		
4 Siege-Gang Commander		
32 creatures		

## Rift-Slide

Gabe Walls – 2003 Worlds Top 8



Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
8 Plains	4 Lightning Rift	1 Decree of Annihilation
8 Mountain	2 Slice and Dice	2 Obliterate
3 Temple of the False God	3 Decree of Justice	1 Demolish
4 Forgotten Cave	3 Wrath of God	1 Slice and Dice
4 Secluded Steppe	4 Spark Spray	1 Overmaster
27 lands	3 Astral Slide	1 Wrath of God
	4 Renewed Faith	1 Decree of Justice
	4 Burning Wish	2 Morning Tide
3 Exalted Angel	27 other spells	1 Ancestral Tribute
3 Eternal Dragon		2 Cleansing Meditation
6 creatures		1 Exalted Angel
		1 Eternal Dragon
		15 sideboard cards

Again we see **Astral Slide** and Goblins, this time joined by the *Odyssey*-block Dynamic Duo of Madness and Wake. All we're missing is **Psychatog**. The numbers:

WORLDS 2003	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Zink - Wake ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	28	7	10	62% / 16% / 22%	10	3	3	63% / 19% / 19%
Humpherys - UG Madness ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	36	0	5	88% / 0% / 12%	13	0	2	87% / 0% / 13%
Eder - Goblin Bidding ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	6	39	1	13% / 85% / 7%	2	12	1	13% / 80% / 7%
Walls - Rift-Slide ( <i>Odyssey</i> / <i>Onslaught</i> / <i>Eighth</i> )	4	37	3	9% / 84% / 7%	1	11	1	8% / 85% / 8%

Three of the four decks get about 85% of their cards from within a single block; one of them doesn't use anything from the other Standard-legal block at all. The fourth deck, Wake, makes good use of a few cards from outside the *Odyssey* block, but not quite enough that it doesn't feel simply like a juiced-up version of the block Wake deck.

Why was Standard during that time period simply one Block deck fighting another? Why couldn't interesting hybrid decks using cards from all available sets flourish? There are myriad possible reasons, which I'll outline below.

**1) The most powerful cards (or mechanics) in the block are the "linear" ones.** What do the following powerful cards have in common: **Astral Slide**, **Arcbound Ravager**, **Circular Logic**, **Goblin Warchief**, **Krark-Clan Ironworks**? Each of them tells you exactly what kinds of other cards to fill your deck with. **Astral Slide** demands cycling cards. **Ravager** and **Ironworks** require artifacts to fulfill their potentials. The **Warchief** commands Goblins. And **Circular Logic** wants free permanent discard outlets.



The problem arises when the only place to find the necessary kinds and quality of cards to combine with these powerhouses to make interesting Standard decks is in the same block as the cards themselves. All the cheapest artifacts are in *Mirrodin*. All the most aggressive Goblins are in *Onslaught* (as are the *only* cycling cards).

And *Odyssey* is the home to the best discard enablers the game has ever seen. Our designers may have believed that most of these cards weren't too overly parasitic—after all, they did work with other cards in the game. *Eighth Edition's* **Goblin Raider** plays just fine with the **Warchief**. **Arcbound Ravager** can eat a **Mirari** just as easily as it can an **Ornithopter**. But in reality, while it may look like you have a few choices, you really have no choices at all. The mechanical themes of the blocks were turned up to levels unmatched by the neighboring blocks and Core Sets.

**2) Neighboring blocks have nothing to do with one another.** Sometimes this happens because of unintentional bad planning in R&D. When we decided to "retire" all the popular creature types in the *Odyssey* block (Goblins, Merfolk, Elves), we had no real idea that we'd be doing a "tribal" block next. By the time we realized we'd like to have some decent Goblins and Elves running around Standard to give players deckbuilding options with *Onslaught*, it was too late.

Sometimes the blocks have nothing to do with one another on purpose, which turns out to be a bad idea in retrospect. We intentionally "starved" the world on gold cards leading up to *Invasion* and on artifacts leading up to *Mirrodin*. The former worked out well; the latter not so much. Why? Because *Invasion* didn't tell you "play as many gold cards as you can," whereas *Mirrodin* told you to "play as many artifacts as you can." Because there weren't too many other artifacts in the Standard environment to choose from, *Mirrodin* decks tended to be very insular.

**3) Core Sets are too weak.** Core Sets tend to contribute to Standard all the time, but usually with support cards. **Birds of Paradise**, **Duress**, **Mana Leak**, and **Enlightened Tutor** are all fine cards, but they tend to merely shore up

existing strategies as opposed to opening doors to new ones. One way to absolutely guarantee that Standard feels different from the various block formats is to put cards that enable new decks in the Core Set. The best historical examples are cards like **Armageddon** and **Opposition**, both of which enabled decks that were comprised of Core Set cards plus cards from expansions.

Assuming we could address all these problems, what would "ideal" Standard decks look like? I went rooting around old web coverage and came up with four good examples from various points in time.

### Squirrel-Opposition

Ken Krouner – 2002 Worlds Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
7 Forest	4 Circular Logic	1 Flametongue Kavu
5 Island	3 Deep Analysis	3 Gainsay
3 Karplusan Forest	4 Fire/Ice	2 Krosan Reclamation
2 Shivan Reef	4 Opposition	2 Phantom Centaur
4 Yavimaya Coast	2 Quiet Speculation	2 Ray of Revelation
21 lands	2 Roar of the Wurm	1 Simoon
	2 Squirrel Nest	2 Static Orb
	21 other spells	2 Unnatural Selection
4 Birds of Paradise		15 sideboard cards
3 Flametongue Kavu		
3 Llanowar Elves		
4 Merfolk Looter		
4 Wild Mongrel		
18 creatures		

### Fires

Jon Finkel – 2000 PT Chicago Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
6 Forest	4 Saproling Burst	3 Earthquake
4 Brushland	4 Fires of Yavimaya	2 Aura Mutation
4 Karplusan Forest	4 Chimeric Idol	2 Obliterate
4 Rishadan Port	3 Urza's Rage	2 Hurricane
3 Mountain	2 Wax/Wane	2 Tangle
2 City of Brass	17 other spells	2 Flashfires
23 lands		1 Kavu Chameleon
		1 Rith, the Awakener
4 Birds of Paradise		15 sideboard cards
4 Blastoderm		
4 Llanowar Elves		
3 River Boa		
2 Ancient Hydra		
2 Kavu Chameleon		
1 Rith, the Awakener		
20 creatures		

### Replenish

Tom van de Logt – 2000 Worlds Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Rishadan Port	3 Enlightened Tutor	1 Cursed Totem
4 Adarkar Wastes	4 Replenish	1 Chill
8 Plains	1 Wrath of God	2 Liltng Refrain
9 Island	1 Seal of Cleansing	2 Submerge
25 lands	4 Opalescence	2 Daze
	4 Parallax Wave	3 Erase
	1 Mystical Tutor	2 Wrath of God
	1 Seal of Removal	1 Circle of Protection: Black
0 creatures	1 Energy Field	1 Seal of Cleansing
	3 Counterspell	15 sideboard cards
	3 Parallax Tide	
	4 Attunement	

4 Frantic Search  
1 Sky Diamond

35 other spells

## Survival-Recur

Brian Selden – 1998 World Champion



### Main Deck 60 cards

3 City of Brass  
8 Forest  
1 Gemstone Mine  
2 Karplusan Forest  
2 Reflecting Pool  
1 Swamp  
2 Underground River  
2 Undiscovered Paradise  
1 Volrath's Stronghold

2 Firestorm  
2 Lobotomy  
4 Recurring Nightmare  
2 Scroll Rack  
4 Survival of the Fittest

14 other spells

### Sideboard

4 Boil  
2 Dread of Night  
3 Emerald Charm  
1 Hall of Gemstone  
2 Phyrexian Furnace  
2 Pyroblast  
1 Staunch Defenders

15 sideboard cards

22 lands

1 Orcish Settlers  
4 Birds of Paradise  
1 Cloudchaser Eagle  
1 Man-o'-War  
2 Nekkaraal  
2 Spike Feeder  
1 Spike Weaver  
1 Spirit of the Night  
1 Thrull Surgeon  
1 Tradewind Rider  
2 Uktabi Orangutan  
1 Verdant Force  
4 Wall of Blossoms  
2 Wall of Roots

24 creatures

HISTORICAL IDEALS	Cards	Cards	Cards	Percentages	Uniques	Uniques	Uniques	Percentages
	from Block 1	from Block 2	from Core Set		from Block 1	from Block 2	from Core Set	
Krouner - Squirrel-Opp ( <i>Invasion / Odyssey / Seventh</i> )	13	17	18	27% / 35% / 38%	4	6	5	27% / 40% / 33%
Finkel - Fires ( <i>Masques / Invasion / Seventh</i> )	18	12	21	35% / 24% / 41%	5	5	6	31% / 31% / 38%
van de Logt - Replenish ( <i>Urza's / Masques / Sixth</i> )	17	13	13	40% / 40% / 40%	5	5	6	31% / 31% / 38%
Selden - Survival-Recur ( <i>Mirage / Tempest / Fifth</i> )	14	26	11	27% / 51% / 22%	9	13	4	35% / 50% / 15%

To me, these decks are things of beauty. My criterion was a simple one—double-digit cards from each of the two relevant blocks *and* the Core Set. I made this up on the fly while writing the article; in R&D, we talk about the ideal Standard deck in abstract and have never actually created a metric to measure it. Obviously this rule is not hard and fast and we should never be trying to force this kind of mixing too much. Should we do our jobs well, this kind of stuff should spring up relatively regularly.

The surprising news to me was that decks that met this criterion were really hard to find, even throughout time, usually because the Core Sets weren't chipping in all that much. I'm still not sure that we as a department will agree that the Core Set should be contributing all that many cards to top-tier decks, but as one of the architects of *Ninth Edition* I wanted to make sure that it did its part to keep Standard fresh.

On that topic, how have we been doing recently with regards to the three problems I listed above? We knew that *Odyssey / Onslaught / Mirrodin* was a low point for Standard deckbuilding—so have we actually corrected anything?

1) On the strength of “linear” cards. *Kamigawa* had quite a few linear cards and mechanics, from “splice onto Arcane” to the tribal interactions of Spirits, Snakes, and Samurai. But we did two things right with those cards. One, if we did make a segment of linear cards powerful, we didn't make enough of them to fill an entire deck. So if you like the interaction between *Lava Spike* and *Glacial Ray*, you still have to look hard for cards to flesh out your deck. Similarly, Hondens work well together but only combine to make a portion of a total deck. Two, if there were enough cards to make a whole deck, we didn't push the mechanic very hard. Snakes are a great example of this—they were decent in block, but aren't

a real player in Standard, which is fine by us. After all, there are next to no other playable Snakes in Standard, and we didn't want a top-tier Standard deck to be made from all *Kamigawa* cards. *Kamigawa*'s "spiritcraft" cards are another fine example.

Ravnica has very few powerful linear cards at all—most of its power is very open-ended. All *Loxodon Hierarch* and *Lightning Helix* demand is that you play mana of their colors; whatever cards you choose to surround them with is up to you. Of the seven keywords so far in the block, only dredge has the potential to be really insular (as it has been in Extended), but in general you tend to see one or two cards from each mechanic in decks as opposed to a deck stuffed with every card that shares a keyword.

**2) On blocks not working together well.** We didn't really address this issue fully until *Ravnica* design, wherein we consciously chose to incorporate two of *Kamigawa*'s major themes—legends and Spirits—into the newer block. These decisions have paid off—I have seen Minamo untap Niv-Mizzet numerous times, and similarly *Plagued Rusalka* was triggering *Tallowisp* regularly at [last weekend's Pro Tour](#).



Ideally we'll be able to subtly weave cards into existing themes from block to block from now on.

**3) On the Core Set being too weak.** The addition of the painlands alone to *Ninth Edition* puts it on the map, as just being able to access better mana makes decks possible in Standard that are not in block. Additionally, there are some great "build-around" cards in *Ninth* like *Wildfire*, *Battle of Wits*, and *Greater Good*.

Of course, by addressing problem #1 on this list we allow more Core Set cards to creep into Standard. Cards like *Phyrexian Arena*, *Ravenous Rats*, and *Sudden Impact* have been around forever, but by loosening up the tyranny of linear block mechanics on deck construction we open the door for these more versatile cards to show up.

Let's take a look at the Top 4 finishers from Honolulu to see how it has all shaken out.

Gruul Beats		
Mark Herberholz – 2006 PT Honolulu Champion		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
2 Skarrg, the Rage Pits	3 Moldervine Cloak	1 Flames of the Blood Hand
7 Mountain	4 Char	2 Tin Street Hooligan
6 Forest	3 Flames of the Blood Hand	2 Rumbling Slum
4 Stomping Ground		2 Naturalize
4 Karplusan Forest	10 other spells	4 Blood Moon
		4 Umezawa's Jitte
23 lands		15 sideboard cards
4 Scab-Clan Mauler		
4 Scorched Rusalka		
4 Giant Solifuge		
4 Dryad Sophisticate		
4 Burning-Tree Shaman		
3 Frenzied Goblin		
4 Kird Ape		
27 creatures		

Zoo		
Craig Jones – 2006 PT Honolulu Finalist		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 Sacred Foundry	2 Bathe in Light	4 Umezawa's Jitte
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Char	2 Tin Street Hooligan
4 Stomping Ground	4 Lightning Helix	1 Flames of the Blood Hand
4 Temple Garden	3 Flames of the Blood Hand	2 Giant Solifuge
2 Forest	3 Shock	3 Hunted Wumpus
1 Eiganjo Castle		3 Guerrilla Tactics
1 Plains	16 other spells	15 sideboard cards
1 Karplusan Forest		
1 Brushland		
22 lands		
4 Savannah Lions		

- 4 Isamaru, Hound of Konda
- 4 Kird Ape
- 4 Watchwolf
- 3 Burning-Tree Shaman
- 3 Kami of Ancient Law

22 creatures

## Owling Mine

Tiago Chan – 2006 PT Honolulu Semifinalist



### Main Deck 60 cards

- 10 Island
- 2 Mountain
- 2 Mikokoro, Center of the Sea
- 4 Steam Vents
- 4 Shivan Reef

22 lands

- 4 Kami of the Crescent Moon

4 creatures

- 4 Sleight of Hand
- 4 Boomerang
- 4 Exhaustion
- 2 Evacuation
- 4 Eye of Nowhere
- 4 Remand
- 4 Howling Mine
- 4 Sudden Impact
- 4 Ebony Owl Netsuke

34 other spells

### Sideboard

- 3 Mana Leak
- 2 Meloku the Clouded Mirror
- 4 Threads of Disloyalty
- 3 Pyroclasm
- 3 Blood Moon

15 sideboard cards

## Hand in Hand

Olivier Ruel – 2006 PT Honolulu Semifinalist



### Main Deck 60 cards

- 4 Caves of Koilos
- 4 Godless Shrine
- 4 Orzhov Basilica
- 1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse
- 1 Eiganjo Castle
- 6 Swamp
- 2 Plains

22 lands

- 4 Plagued Rusalka
- 4 Ravenous Rats
- 4 Dark Confidant
- 3 Hand of Cruelty
- 2 Shrieking Grottesque
- 2 Paladin en-Vec
- 3 Teysa, Orzhov Scion
- 4 Ghost Council of Orzhova
- 2 Okiba-Gang Shinobi

28 creatures

- 3 Umezawa's Jitte
- 4 Castigate
- 3 Mortify

10 other spells

### Sideboard

- 2 Terashi's Grasp
- 1 Descendant of Kiyomaro
- 2 Distress
- 2 Cranial Extraction
- 2 Phyrexian Arena
- 2 Orzhov Pontiff
- 2 Seize the Soul
- 2 Slay

15 sideboard cards

HONOLULU TOP 4	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Herberholz - Gruul Beats (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	3	36	8	6% / 77% / 17%	1	10	2	8% / 77% / 15%
Jones - Zoo (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	11	25	17	21% / 47% / 32%	4	7	6	24% / 41% / 35%
Chan - Owling Mine (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	14	4	26	32% / 9% / 59%	4	1	7	33% / 8% / 58%
O. Ruel - Hand in Hand (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	12	32	10	22% / 59% / 19%	5	9	3	29% / 53% / 18%

Yes, Herberholz's Gruul deck is essentially a block deck with **Kird Apes**. And yes, Chan's Owling Mine relies a little too heavily on *Ninth* and not enough on stuff from *Guildpact*. But overall this is the best Standard has ever looked in my opinion. In fact, this cross-section is probably *more* perfect than if every deck were an even blend of each constituent part. Some decks have a "Ravnica" feel, some have a "Kamigawa" feel, and some even have a "Ninth" feel, but they all rely on key pieces from the other sets to make the whole what it is. Most importantly, there are no zeros anywhere on the chart.

Can we keep this up? I hope so, but it is difficult. We don't want to avoid new linear mechanics—after all, many of those turn out to be incredibly fun and popular (such as Slivers). We know a large group of players don't enjoy



agonizing over deckbuilding but would rather instead throw a bunch of cards that share a type or keyword together, and we need to make sure they have a good experience as well. But what we can do is stop regularly pushing set themes to the level where they are incompatible with everything else in the environment. I'd like to think that we've already done that.

In closing, here are a dozen more decklists from Honolulu and the most recent round of Nationals and Worlds, going back about a year. The numbers tend to be pretty good across the board, as all these events happened after the major banning of affinity cards. Some decks favor certain blocks to be sure, but there is only a single zero on the chart. I hope that's the last zero I'll ever see in one of these analyses,

and Standard will continue to showcase different decks than those we'll see in Block play.

Let's end all the Block-on-Block violence. Drop me a line if you feel strongly one way or the other.

### Heartbeat Combo

Max Bracht – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
10 Forest	4 Sensei's Divining Top	1 Umezawa's Jitte
10 Island	4 Remand	1 Pyroclasm
1 Swamp	4 Muddle the Mixture	4 Vinelasher Kudzu
1 Mountain	1 Boomerang	3 Iwamori of the Open Fist
22 lands	4 Heartbeat of Spring	2 Meloku the Clouded Mirror
	4 Early Harvest	1 Keiga, the Tide Star
	4 Kodama's Reach	3 Savage Twister
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	1 Compulsive Research	15 sideboard cards
4 Drift of Phantasms	1 Recollect	
1 Maga, Traitor to Mortals	1 Weird Harvest	
9 creatures	1 Invoke the Firemind	
	29 other spells	

### Izzetron

Osyp Lebedowicz – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Steam Vents	4 Izzet Signet	4 Giant Solifuge
4 Shivan Reef	4 Remand	4 Annex
4 Urza's Mine	4 Mana Leak	2 Smash
4 Urza's Tower	4 Electrolyze	2 Pyroclasm
4 Urza's Power Plant	4 Compulsive Research	1 Ryusei, the Falling Star
2 Tendo Ice Bridge	2 Pyroclasm	2 Repeal
1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge	2 Confiscate	15 sideboard cards
23 lands	2 Telling Time	
	1 Invoke the Firemind	
4 Keiga, the Tide Star	1 Blaze	
4 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	1 Tidings	
8 creatures	29 other spells	

### Ghost Dad

Ben Goodman – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 32

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Godless Shrine	3 Pillory of the Sleepless	3 Cranial Extraction
4 Caves of Koilos	1 Indomitable Will	2 Blessed Breath
6 Plains	1 Strands of Undeath	2 Persecute
6 Swamp	4 Sickening Shoal	2 Umezawa's Jitte
1 Eiganjo Castle	4 Shining Shoal	2 Pithing Needle
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	13 other spells	1 Kami of Ancient Law
1 Tomb of Urami		1 Miren, the Moaning Well
23 lands		1 Enfeeblement
		1 Pillory of the Sleepless
		15 sideboard cards

- 4 Tallowisp
- 4 Dark Confidant
- 3 Kami of Ancient Law
- 4 Ghost Council of Orzhova
- 2 Teysa, Orzhov Scion
- 3 Plagued Rusalka
- 4 Thief of Hope

24 creatures

## Roxodon Hierarchy

Jelger Wieggersma – 2006 PT Honolulu Top 32



### Main Deck 60 cards

- 4 Temple Garden
- 4 Overgrown Tomb
- 1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse
- 3 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree
- 1 Selesnya Sanctuary
- 1 Orzhov Basilica
- 2 Godless Shrine
- 3 Swamp
- 4 Plains

23 lands

- 4 Loxodon Hierarch
- 2 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni
- 2 Angel of Despair

8 creatures

- 4 Wrath of God
- 3 Faith's Fetters
- 4 Phyrexian Arena
- 3 Putrefy
- 3 Mortify
- 4 Cranial Extraction
- 4 Castigate
- 4 Orzhov Signet

29 other spells

### Sideboard

- 4 Last Gasp
- 2 Pithing Needle
- 2 Naturalize
- 1 Peace of Mind
- 2 Night of Souls' Betrayal
- 1 Eradicate
- 3 Nezumi Shortfang

15 sideboard cards

## GhaziGlare

Katsuhiko Mori – 2005 World Champion



### Main Deck 60 cards

- 4 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree
- 4 Selesnya Sanctuary
- 1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers
- 4 Brushland
- 5 Forest
- 4 Temple Garden
- 1 Plains
- 3 Pithing Needle
- 3 Umezawa's Jitte
- 2 Congregation at Dawn
- 3 Glare of Subdual
- 2 Seed Spark

13 other spells

23 lands

- 2 Yosei, the Morning Star
- 3 Arashi, the Sky Asunder
- 1 Birds of Paradise
- 4 Selesnya Guildmage
- 4 Wood Elves
- 4 Loxodon Hierarch
- 3 Kodama of the North Tree
- 3 Llanowar Elves

24 creatures

### Sideboard

- 2 Greater Good
- 1 Kodama of the North Tree
- 2 Naturalize
- 2 Carven Caryatid
- 1 Seedborn Muse
- 1 Wrath of God
- 1 Kodama's Reach
- 2 Yosei, the Morning Star
- 3 Hokori, Dust Drinker

15 sideboard cards

## Greater Gifts

Frank Karsten – 2005 Worlds Finalist



### Main Deck 60 cards

- 1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers
- 1 Miren, the Moaning Well
- 2 Temple Garden
- 2 Overgrown Tomb
- 1 Watery Grave
- 3 Greater Good
- 4 Kodama's Reach
- 2 Farseek
- 3 Gifts Ungiven
- 3 Goryo's Vengeance

### Sideboard

- 1 Hana Kami
- 1 Death Denied
- 1 Soulless Revival
- 1 Last Gasp
- 1 Loxodon Hierarch
- 1 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni

2 Brushland  
 1 Island  
 1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse  
 3 Swamp  
 3 Plains  
 4 Forest  
 2 Tendo Ice Bridge

23 lands

4 Yosei, the Morning Star  
 2 Kokusho, the Evening Star  
 1 Kagemaro, First to Suffer  
 4 Sakura-Tribe Elder

11 creatures

3 Sensei's Divining Top  
 1 Reclaim  
 1 Recollect  
 1 Last Gasp  
 1 Putrefy  
 4 Wrath of God

26 other spells

4 Defense Grid  
 1 Dosan the Falling Leaf  
 1 Hideous Laughter  
 1 Cranial Extraction  
 1 Rending Vines  
 1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror

15 sideboard cards

## Enduring Ideal

Akira Asahara – 2005 Worlds Semifinalist



### Main Deck 60 cards

4 Sacred Foundry  
 4 Adarkar Wastes  
 4 Tendo Ice Bridge  
 7 Island  
 3 Plains  
 1 Boseiju, Who Shelters All

23 lands

0 creatures

4 Enduring Ideal  
 4 Boros Signet  
 4 Fellwar Stone  
 4 Sleight of Hand  
 4 Telling Time  
 4 Wrath of God  
 4 Faith's Fetters  
 1 Ivory Mask  
 1 Zur's Weirding  
 3 Form of the Dragon  
 3 Confiscate  
 1 Compulsive Research

37 other spells

### Sideboard

4 Pyroclasm  
 1 Privileged Position  
 4 Mana Leak  
 4 Defense Grid  
 1 Ivory Mask  
 1 Genju of the Realm

15 sideboard cards

## Critical Mass Update

Antoine Ruel – 2005 Worlds Undefeated



### Main Deck 60 cards

4 Yavimaya Coast  
 3 Overgrown Tomb  
 1 Swamp  
 2 Tendo Ice Bridge  
 1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers  
 5 Forest  
 4 Island  
 1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge  
 1 Miren, the Moaning Well  
 1 Oboro, Palace in the Clouds

23 lands

3 Kodama of the North Tree  
 4 Sakura-Tribe Elder  
 4 Wood Elves  
 2 Keiga, the Tide Star  
 3 Meloku the Clouded Mirror  
 3 Llanowar Elves

19 creatures

1 Time of Need  
 4 Umezawa's Jitte  
 3 Sensei's Divining Top  
 3 Mana Leak  
 3 Putrefy  
 4 Hinder

18 other spells

### Sideboard

3 Iwamori of the Open Fist  
 1 Mana Leak  
 4 Threads of Disloyalty  
 3 Naturalize  
 3 Cranial Extraction  
 1 Putrefy

15 sideboard cards

## Viridian Rats

Jason Olynyk – 2005 Canadian National Champion



### Main Deck 60 cards

### Sideboard

2 Sword of Light and Shadow

12 Swamp	3 Night's Whisper	3 Razormane Masticore
1 Shizo, Death's Storehouse	3 Rend Flesh	1 Viridian Shaman
4 Llanowar Wastes	4 Aether Vial	3 Cranial Extraction
2 Tendo Ice Bridge	4 Umezawa's Jitte	4 Distress
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	2 Pithing Needle	1 Pithing Needle
23 lands	16 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 Hypnotic Specter		
4 Ravenous Rats		
4 Nezumi Shortfang		
3 Chittering Rats		
3 Viridian Shaman		
2 Nekkataal		
2 Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni		
21 creatures		

### Jushi Blue

Neil Reeves – 2005 US Nationals Finalist

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
21 Island	3 Annul	4 Twincast
4 Stalking Stones	4 Mana Leak	1 Sakashima the Impostor
25 lands	2 Condescend	1 Uyo, Silent Prophet
	4 Hinder	1 Mephidross Vampire
	4 Vedalken Shackles	1 Triskelion
4 Jushi Apprentice	2 Oblivion Stone	1 Annul
4 Spire Golem	3 Boomerang	4 Threads of Disloyalty
8 creatures	3 Rewind	2 Echoing Truth
	2 Thirst for Knowledge	15 sideboard cards
	27 other spells	

### Flores Red

Josh Ravitz – 2005 US Nationals Top 8

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Tendo Ice Bridge	4 Sensei's Divining Top	4 Culling Scales
4 Blinkmoth Nexus	4 Wayfarer's Bauble	3 Cranial Extraction
1 Swamp	1 Sowing Salt	4 Fireball
15 Mountain	4 Molten Rain	3 Boseiju, Who Shelters All
24 lands	3 Beacon of Destruction	1 Sowing Salt
	4 Shrapnel Blast	15 sideboard cards
	4 Pulse of the Forge	
4 Arc-Slogger	4 Magma Jet	
4 Solemn Simulacrum	28 other spells	
8 creatures		

### Tooth and Nail

Julien Goron – 2005 French Nation Champion

Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Urza's Mine	4 Sensei's Divining Top	4 Troll Ascetic
4 Urza's Tower	4 Tooth and Nail	1 Plow Under
4 Urza's Power Plant	4 Sylvan Scrying	3 Creeping Mold
7 Forest	4 Reap and Sow	3 Iwamori of the Open Fist
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	2 Oblivion Stone	2 Molder Slug
1 Boseiju, Who Shelters All	2 Chrome Mox	1 Oblivion Stone
21 lands	3 Plow Under	1 Viridian Shaman
	23 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 Vine Trellis		
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder		
3 Eternal Witness		

2 Viridian Shaman  
 1 Sundering Titan  
 1 Triskelion  
 1 Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker  
 1 Mephidross Vampire

16 creatures

OTHER RECENT DECKS	Cards from Block 1	Cards from Block 2	Cards from Core Set	Percentages	Uniques from Block 1	Uniques from Block 2	Uniques from Core Set	Percentages
Bracht - Heartbeat (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	17	17	6	43% / 43% / 15%	5	6	3	36% / 43% / 21%
Lebedowicz - Izzetron (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	11	23	26	18% / 38% / 43%	4	7	9	20% / 35% / 45%
Goodman - Ghost Dad (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	23	21	4	48% / 44% / 8%	9	7	1	53% / 41% / 6%
Wiegiersma - Roxodon (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	7	38	8	13% / 72% / 15%	3	13	2	17% / 72% / 11%
Mori - GhaziGlare (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	15	28	10	28% / 53% / 19%	6	9	3	33% / 50% / 17%
Karsten - Greater Gifts (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	29	10	10	59% / 20% / 20%	12	7	4	52% / 30% / 17%
Asahara - Enduring Ideal (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	9	17	24	18% / 34% / 48%	3	5	8	19% / 31% / 50%
A. Ruel - Critical Mass (Kamigawa / Ravnica / Ninth)	30	6	14	60% / 12% / 28%	13	2	4	68% / 11% / 21%
Olynyk - Viridian Rats (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Ninth)	14	18	16	29% / 38% / 33%	4	7	5	25% / 44% / 31%
Reeves - Jushi Blue (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Eighth)	21	8	10	54% / 21% / 26%	7	2	3	58% / 17% / 25%
Ravitz - Flores Red (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Eighth)	35	9	0	80% / 20% / 0%	9	3	0	75% / 25% / 0%
Goron - Tooth and Nail (Mirrodin / Kamigawa / Eighth)	24	11	18	45% / 21% / 34%	10	5	5	50% / 25% / 25%

## Last Week's Poll:

Which of the following lands will be the most abundant in this weekend's Top 8 Standard decks from the Pro Tour?		
Steam Vents	1890	20.5%
Temple Garden	1609	17.5%
Godless Shrine	1556	16.9%
Overgrown Tomb	1390	15.1%
Stomping Ground	959	10.4%
Watery Grave	862	9.4%
Sacred Foundry	571	6.2%
Yavimaya Coast	140	1.5%
Adarkar Wastes	111	1.2%
Sulfurous Springs	110	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9198</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The correct answer was **Steam Vents**, as three of the Top 8 decks were blue-red.

## This Week's Poll:

**Should Standard be a regular Pro Tour format?**

Yes, Honolulu was great.

No, I don't like pros dictating the metagame.

No, it isn't as interesting as Block or Extended.

I don't care.

Aaron Forsythe was a professional **Magic** player and Internet columnist prior to leaving Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to join Wizards of the Coast. His first duty here was Content Manager of this very website, a job that required him to do actual work as opposed to playing games all the time. So when a position opened in R&D, he jumped at the chance. He is now director of **Magic R&D**, and still plays **Magic** in his free time when he's not busy playing **Magic**.



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