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New Seasons Kick off New Year

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
Friday, January 5, 2007



Happy New Year everyone! Since the last time we met, the Limited PTQ format cycled down. This past weekend saw the last Limited PTQs for Geneva and there will not be any more individual Limited PTQs feeding Pro Tours in 2007. After what has seemed like an endless string of 40-card events, Constructed events are finally upon us – and its not just PTQs. Just this coming weekend alone you could play in relevant Magic events from Friday night right through to the beginning of the week.

Friday Night Fights

Normally I show off the new Friday Night Magic foil prize card at the end of my column. I realize that there is no reason that your local FNM participating store could not run the event as a Limited event (which would seem weird considering the build-up I just created for Constructed events) but whether your local store runs the event as a 40-card or 60-card affair, this month's FNM is especially relevant to Constructed connoisseurs. The Firebolt that you can win this evening might just come in handy if you plan on playing in any PTQs over the coming weeks, as the flashback burn spell is a Boros Deck Wins staple.



Weekend Warriors

Saturdays and Sundays are chock full of Constructed opportunities in the coming months. The most relevant happening for TWTW readers is undoubtedly the [PTQ season for Yokohama](#) that starts up on Saturday. The format is Extended and you can find [the most successful Extended decks from Worlds right here](#) in case you haven't already done your homework.

Remember to keep coming back to the Tournament Center throughout the season as there will be Top 8 decklists from each week's PTQs. The metagame shifts very quickly and unless you stay on top of the past week's innovations you could find yourself being closed in on by ominous fins. Fortunately for all of us Mike Flores gives weekly swimming lessons throughout the PTQ season.

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In addition to the PTQ season, there is the fresh [Magic Scholarship Series](#) to think about. Players 18 years of age and younger without any Pro Points earned at a Pro Tour event – Pro Points earned at Grand Prix do not count toward losing amateur status – are eligible to compete in these Standard tournaments. Everyone who participates in one of these events receives an exclusive foil promotional [Whirling Dervish](#).

There are plenty of other prizes as well including pens, deluxe school portfolios and satchels – all designed to make your school life easier. But the most important prize is a \$500 scholarship award and an invite to play in the Championships later this year with \$100,000 in scholarship money on the line. Since the early days of the Junior Pro Tour through the end of 2006, Wizards of the Coast has given away \$2,926,000 in scholarship prizes and will cross the \$3 million threshold by this summer.

If that was not enough **Magic** for you already, there are also [City Championships](#) to consider. The Beta season is just getting under way in North America and will provide a new on-ramp for the Road to Worlds, as players will be able to earn byes to their Regional Championships and win invites to Nationals at these weekly tournaments. We will be checking back on the early results from these events in the coming weeks. Like FNM, these tournaments will be a mix of Limited and Constructed with the Constructed events running the gamut from Vintage to Standard (although only a very small percentage can be run as Vintage or Legacy).

Looking Forward

The [2007 Pro Tour schedule](#) has featured a glaring hole since it was first announced in this column last year. The location of Worlds has remained a mystery – albeit a poorly kept one. It has not been exactly a state secret that Wizards was hoping to hold the tournament in New York City, but it was unclear whether or not the Pro Tour would actually return to the city that never sleeps for the first time since Kai and the Phoenix Foundation won at Madison Square Garden in 2001.

"I am sure this will make BDM very happy," prefaced DCI Program Manager Scott Larabee before making the official announcement about this year's World Championships. "Worlds will be in New York City in 2007. It will be held at the Javits Center on December 6-9, 2007. Those with sharp eyes will note that this will be a four-day Worlds."

Traditionally Worlds has been a five-day marathon that is actually even longer when you factor in the day for registration and the player party. Personally, I welcome shaving a day off the festivities. I don't know about the players, but speaking as a coverage team member I know that we are usually all worn down to a dull finish by time the event concludes. I asked Scott how this was going to be handled.

"While we are still finalizing details, it looks like Worlds will be 16 rounds (instead of 18) with five rounds of Constructed and a three-round draft on Days One and Two. Day Three will be the team day. Day Four will be the finals," Scott explained.

One fewer day is not the only change on the horizon for World Championships. The team format is undergoing a dramatic facelift as well:

"While we haven't ironed out all the details, it does look like we will be running the team competition in 2007 as Two-Headed Giant," said Scott. "We *It's been six years since New York* will have more information on exactly how that will work in the coming weeks. *hosted a major Magic event.*"

"These are all not necessarily permanent changes," Scott was quick to point out. "From time to time, we have (and will) try out new formats and ways of running tournaments. Examples from the past are the Pro Tour-Philadelphia skins format in 2005 and three-person team play, which was an experiment when we tried it back in 1999. We will continue to try out new formats and tournament systems. We may continue to use them or we may decide that they do not work."

Along with announcing Worlds, Scott was able to make the dates and locations for U.S. and Canadian Nationals public. U.S. Nationals and the Scholarship Series Championship will be held in Baltimore, Maryland on July 26-29, and Canadian Nationals will be held in Toronto on September 8-9.

While You Were Sleeping

We closed the tournament season with the Japanese **Magic** community once again dominating the World Championships and we pick up right where we left off. While the rest of the **Magic** world took a well-deserved break from the game after Worlds, the Japanese community had to dive back in for one last event. Each year there is a major invitation-only tournament in Japan that is known as The Finals. There are qualifying events leading up to the Constructed extravaganza that features one day of Standard and one day of Extended play.

Last year's winner was 2004 Pro Tour-Kobe winner Masashiro Kuroda, which should give you an idea of the level of competition found at this event. If you need additional evidence, look no further than this year's winner Katsuhiro Mori. The former Rookie of the Year followed up his 2005 World Championship title by winning the 2006 Japanese National Championship and another trip to the Top 8 of Worlds in 2006. He fell short of the mark but his TriscuitTron deck made it all the way through to the finals in the hands of Ryo Ogura before losing to Mihara's storm of dragons.

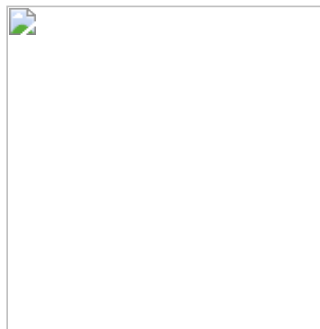
Mori took his Tron deck back to the drawing board and began to reshape it – perhaps to be more successful against a certain storm-based combo deck. The creation that emerged can only be called PickleTron as he replaced the



two Triskelavus cards with the Brine Elemental/Vesuvan Shapeshifter lock – along with a Teferi-fueled Mystical Teachings to find them.

Apparently the deck has been taking *Magic Online* by storm. Portuguese rising star Andre Coimbra has been tearing up the PEs with the deck and it was featured in Frank Karsten's column this past Wednesday, where among other things he complained about the word "pickles" being attached to Brine Elemental decks.

Mori won the event, defeating Yuya Watanabe's more traditional Izzetron deck in the finals. Along with the pair of Tron decks in the final, there was a herd of aggro decks split between Boros and Gruul builds. The Top 8 was rounded out by an updated Panda Connection that moved *Wrath of God* to the sideboard and a deck I have dubbed Lunar Flare. It is a Solar Flare variant with black that does not use *Smallpox*. Why Lunar Flare? *Skeletal Vampire* would have nothing to do with anything called Solar.



Katsuhiro Mori added another impressive title to his resume.

Without further ado, here are the 2006 Top 8 Standard Decks from The Finals.

Katsuhiro Mori – PickleTron		
2006 The Finals – Winner		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Adarkar Wastes	2 Annex	1 Calciform Pools
1 Azorius Chancery	4 Azorius Signet	2 Circle of Protection: Red
4 Hallowed Fountain	1 Careful Consideration	1 Disenchant
2 Urza's Factory	1 Commandeer	1 Faith's Fetters
4 Urza's Mine	4 Compulsive Research	2 Jester's Scepter
4 Urza's Power Plant	3 Dimir Signet	2 Muse Vessel
4 Urza's Tower	2 Faith's Fetters	1 Return to Dust
1 Vesuva	1 Mystical Teachings	1 Rewind
24 lands	4 Remand	2 Serrated Arrows
	1 Repeal	2 Shadow of Doubt
1 Brine Elemental	2 Spell Burst	15 sideboard cards
2 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir	2 Think Twice	
1 Vesuvan Shapeshifter	2 Tidings	
4 creatures	3 Wrath of God	
	32 other spells	

Yuya Watanabe – Izzetron		
2006 The Finals – Finalist		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
2 Island	4 Compulsive Research	3 Annex
4 Shivan Reef	2 Demonfire	4 Bottle Gnomes
4 Steam Vents	1 Dimir Signet	2 Commandeer
1 Urza's Factory	3 Electrolyze	1 Desert
4 Urza's Mine	4 Izzet Signet	3 Serrated Arrows
4 Urza's Power Plant	4 Mana Leak	2 Trickbind
4 Urza's Tower	4 Remand	15 sideboard cards
1 Vesuva	3 Repeal	
24 lands	2 Spell Burst	
	3 Think Twice	
3 Bogardan Hellkite	1 Tidings	
2 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir	31 other spells	
5 creatures		

Hiroya Shimada – Boros Deck Wins		
2006 The Finals – Semifinalist		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
4 Battlefield Forge	4 Char	2 Bathe in Light
2 Boros Garrison	4 Lightning Helix	1 Cloudchaser Kestrel
1 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Rift Bolt	3 Cryoclash
2 Gemstone Mine	4 Volcanic Hammer	2 Disenchant

9 Plains
4 Sacred Foundry

16 other spells

3 Glorious Anthem
3 Honorable Passage
1 Worship

22 lands

15 sideboard cards

4 Icatian Javelineers
4 Knight of the Holy Nimbus
4 Paladin en-Vec
4 Savannah Lions
4 Soltari Priest
2 Wildfire Emissary

22 creatures

Yohei Tomizawa – Lunar Flare

2006 The Finals – Semifinalist



Main Deck

61 cards

2 Adarkar Wastes
1 Azorius Chancery
2 Caves of Koilos
2 Flagstones of Trokair
2 Godless Shrine
3 Hallowed Fountain
1 Island
1 Orzhov Basilica
2 Plains
3 Swamp
1 Underground River
1 Urza's Factory
1 Vesuva
1 Watery Grave

3 Azorius Signet
2 Careful Consideration
4 Castigate
4 Compulsive Research
4 Dimir Signet
2 Dread Return
1 Faith's Fetters
2 Persecute
4 Remand
4 Wrath of God

30 other spells

23 lands

1 Akroma, Angel of Wrath
4 Angel of Despair
2 Skeletal Vampire
1 Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir

8 creatures

Sideboard

2 Circle of Protection: Red
2 Darkness
2 Disenchant
3 Faith's Fetters
1 Return to Dust
3 Shadowmage Infiltrator
2 Trickbind

15 sideboard cards

Akihiro Kato – Gruul Deck Wins

2006 The Finals – Quarterfinalist



Main Deck

60 cards

6 Forest
4 Karplusan Forest
6 Mountain
1 Pendelhaven
1 Skarrg, the Rage Pits
4 Stomping Ground

4 Char
2 Moldervine Cloak
4 Rift Bolt
4 Volcanic Hammer

14 other spells

22 lands

4 Burning-Tree Shaman
4 Giant Solifuge
4 Kird Ape
4 Llanowar Elves
4 Scab-Clan Mauler
4 Scorched Rusalka

24 creatures

Sideboard

3 Blood Moon
3 Call of the Herd
3 Krosan Grip
3 Stone Rain
3 Tin Street Hooligan

15 sideboard cards

Tomoharu Saito – Boros Deck Wins

2006 The Finals – Quarterfinalist



Main Deck

Sideboard

60 cards

4 Battlefield Forge
3 Boros Garrison
2 Flagstones of Trokair
2 Gemstone Mine
2 Mountain
6 Plains
4 Sacred Foundry

23 lands

4 Giant Solifuge
4 Icatian Javelineers
4 Knight of the Holy Nimbus
4 Savannah Lions
4 Soltari Priest

20 creatures

4 Char
3 Demonfire
4 Lightning Helix
4 Rift Bolt
2 Volcanic Hammer

17 other spells

4 Cryociasm
3 Honorable Passage
2 Paladin en-Vec
3 Ronom Unicorn
3 Worship

15 sideboard cards

Ryoma Shiozu – Gruul Deck Wins

2006 The Finals – Quarterfinalist



Main Deck 60 cards

6 Forest
4 Karplusan Forest
6 Mountain
1 Pendelhaven
2 Skarrg, the Rage Pits
4 Stomping Ground

23 lands

3 Burning-Tree Shaman
4 Giant Solifuge
4 Kird Ape
4 Llanowar Elves
4 Scab-Clan Mauler
2 Scorched Rusalka
4 Tin Street Hooligan

25 creatures

2 Call of the Herd
4 Char
4 Seal of Fire
2 Stonewood Invocation

12 other spells

Sideboard

3 Blood Moon
1 Call of the Herd
1 Forest
1 Giant Growth
3 Krosan Grip
2 Parallelectric Feedback
2 Serrated Arrows
2 Spike Feeder

15 sideboard cards

Ryo Tamura – Panda Connection

2006 The Finals – Quarterfinalist



Main Deck 60 cards

4 Caves of Koilos
3 Flagstones of Trokair
1 Gemstone Mine
4 Godless Shrine
3 Orzhov Basilica
1 Orzhova, the Church of Deals
2 Plains
3 Swamp
1 Temple Garden

22 lands

4 Dark Confidant
3 Ghost Council of Orzhova
4 Hypnotic Specter
4 Knight of the Holy Nimbus
3 Martyr of Sands
1 Paladin en-Vec
4 Savannah Lions
2 Selesnya Guildmage

25 creatures

4 Castigate
3 Faith's Fetters
2 Persecute
2 Psychotic Episode
2 Temporal Isolation

13 other spells

Sideboard

2 Angel of Despair
1 Martyr of Sands
1 Orzhov Basilica
4 Phyrexian Arena
1 Sacred Mesa
2 Temporal Isolation
4 Wrath of God

15 sideboard cards

The Limits

While Katsuhiko Mori was winning The Finals last year's winner, Masashiro Kuroda was playing in a new end-of-year tournament in Japan that focuses on Limited skills. There were no invitations for "The Limits" – players needed to win a shop qualifier first. Each winner then advanced to the regional qualifier, and the winners of the each regional qualifier was awarded a spot at the event, along with transportation and accommodations.

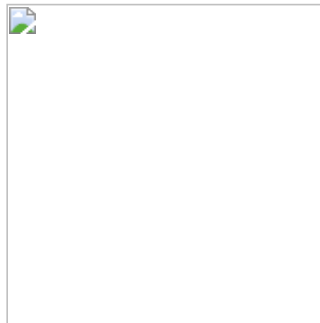
Sixteen players, including Takuya Osawa, Ryo Ogura, Itaru Ishida, and Masashiro Kuroda, played in this inaugural tournament. The players faced three rounds of Booster Draft, three rounds of Sealed Deck, and three rounds of Rochester Draft. The tournament culminated with the Top 8 players doing a *Time Spiral* Rotisserie Draft.



In the Rotisserie Draft each and every card from the set – Timeshifted cards too – was laid out on the table and the players picked cards one by one. It was a tough draft featuring two former Pro Tour winners – Kuroda and Pro Tour-Prague winner Osawa – in addition to Hall of Fame-eligible Itaru Ishida.

In the end it was little known Ryo Tasaki defeating Osawa in the finals. In addition to beating the Prague champion, the Tokyo University student had to get past two-time Worlds Top 8 competitor Ryo Ogura in the semifinals.

"Before this event he was just a guy," laughed coverage reporter Keita Mori. "But now he is the champion."



Ryo Tasaki hoarded the black removal en route to victory.

Ryo Tasaki
2006 The Limits – Winner



Main Deck
40 cards

1 Desert	1 Basal Sliver	1 Ancient Grudge
1 Forest	1 Gorgon Recluse	1 Assassinate
1 Molten Slagheap	1 Magus of the Mirror	1 Funeral Charm
4 Mountain	1 Mindless Automaton	1 Haunting Hymn
8 Swamp	1 Orcish Librarian	1 Lotus Bloom
1 Terramorphic Expanse	1 Sedge Sliver	1 Premature Burial
16 lands	1 Shadow Guildmage	1 Prismatic Lens
	1 Stronghold Overseer	1 Strangling Soot
	1 Stuffy Doll	1 Sudden Death
	1 Twisted Abomination	1 Sudden Spoiling
	1 Uthden Troll	1 Tendrils of Corruption
		1 Void
		1 Word of Seizing
	11 creatures	
		13 other spells

Takuya Osawa

2006 The Limits – Finalist



Main Deck

40 cards

7 Forest	1 Bogardan Hellkite	1 Ancestral Vision
1 Fungal Reaches	1 Brine Elemental	1 Assault // Battery
6 Island	1 Gemhide Sliver	1 Hail Storm
2 Mountain	1 Greenseeker	1 Tromp the Domains
1 Pendelhaven	1 Hunting Moa	
	1 Ixidron	4 other spells
17 lands	1 Looter il-Kor	
	1 Mystic Snake	
	1 Nantuko Shaman	
	1 Pirate Ship	
	1 Prodigal Sorcerer	
	1 Scryb Ranger	
	1 Spectral Force	
	1 Spike Feeder	
	1 Spinneret Sliver	
	1 Thelonite Hermit	
	1 Thornscape Battlemage	
	1 Tolarian Sentinel	
	1 Verdeloth the Ancient	
	19 creatures	

Firestarter: What's in a name?

Pickles or U/B Morph? Which camp of deck namers do you fall into? Do you prefer more whimsical deck names that might be tied to some back story (or in this case the brining process of making pickles and the figure of speech of "being in a pickle") or would you rather much more straightforward names that explain exactly what the deck does. Do you like your deck names to have a little Solar Flare? Share your thoughts, opinions, and favorite deck names in the forums.

*Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is Top8Magic.com, the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.*



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