

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

# Prepping for the PTQs

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
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Manufacturers of packages of sleeves that come in quantities greater than 50 can finally pay their employees. After what seemed like season after season of Limited PTQs, the [Extended season for Pro Tour–Yokohama](#) got under way this past weekend. As with every Constructed season you can rely on the Tournament Center for the most accurate snapshot of the past weekend's metagame with Top 8 decklists from around the world.



As of this writing there were only two sets of decklists submitted for the first weekend, but hopefully when we commence our organized campaign of shaming tournament organizers to do the required data entry it will fill up quickly. I took the opportunity this week to get to know the winners from Charleston and Minnesota and find out about their decks, their experiences, and their approach to the tournament.



[Scott Schauf won the Charleston event](#) with an Aggro Loam list modified from the deck that went 5-1 at Worlds in the hands of Emilio Lopez Campos. The most significant change appears to be the swap out of [Vinelasher Kudzu](#) with the more synergistic [Werebear](#). If you are unfamiliar with this deck, it is a descendant of the CAL deck that was designed by reigning World Champion Makihito Mihara (and suggested by him as a good PTQ choice for this season).

The deck is basically a different flavored Vore deck with [Terravore](#) standing in for its hasty brethren while [Devastating Dreams](#) steals the role of [Wildfire](#). [Terravore](#) can quickly become lethal with cycling lands, fetch lands, and lands discarded to [Devastating Dreams](#). For backup the deck has [Seismic Assault](#) with [Life from the Loam](#). There are some other fatties as a Plan C, but Plans A and B are easy enough to implement with the card-drawing engine that [Life from the Loam](#) and cycling lands provide.

[In Minnesota, Trevor Jones](#) modified a Mike Flores creation – the much maligned green-white Haterator – by swapping around some numbers and changing out [Ravenous Baloth](#) from the initial build used at a Top 8 Magic Mock Tournament (where it finished second to Steve Sadin playing Campos's Worlds list) for [Exalted Angels](#).

The Haterator is basically a metagame deck that has overwhelming advantages in certain matchups. Against almost any creature-based deck – Boros, Affinity, mono-red Goblins, Rock, etc. – the deck can win with a [Worship/Troll Ascetic](#) lock, with [Umezawa's Jitte](#) advantage, or with [Sword of Fire and Ice](#). Against combo decks, Haterator can usually shut down the opponent with a well-timed [Orim's Chant](#) or [Gilded Light](#). The glaring hole in the deck's battle plan is against [Hallowed Fountain](#).

Enough back story... on to the interviews:

**BDM:** Tell us a little bit about yourself and your approach to *Magic*.

**Scott:** I'm 20 years old, and I work for the YMCA, watching kids before and after school. I've been playing competitively for a couple of years, but I've been around the game in one capacity or another since *Stronghold* was released. I prefer control and/or combo decks, as they let me do "broken things."

**Trevor:** I'm 29 years old. My job title is senior marketing analyst, but I really write computer programs and do statistical modeling/analysis. I've been playing *Magic* since Fourth Edition came out. I bought a lot of *Ice Age* and then didn't play much until I was in college and the Urza's block came out. I'm probably known for playing more aggro decks. The other decks I've qualified or won money at Grand Prix with were RUG, Goblins, Zoo, and Tooth and Nail.

**BDM:** What deck did you play and why did you choose it? What were your deciding factors?

**Scott:** I played a tweaked build of Aggro Loam, using Emilio Lopez Campos's list from Worlds as a starting point. I was looking for a deck that was positive against both Boros and TEPS, as I predicted (incorrectly, I might add) that those two decks would be the most common. Also, it is capable of some very, very broken plays, which is a prerequisite in most decks I play. Card availability is never a problem. I have a rather large collection, and if I'm missing a random card, I can pick it up from one of my teammates and/or local shops pretty much every time.

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**Scott Schauf**  
1st Place - West Virginia - Charleston - 1/6

Main Deck Sideboard

| 60 cards            |                      | Sideboard            |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Blood Crypt       | 4 Burning Wish       | 1 Chainer's Edict    |
| 3 Bloodstained Mire | 4 Cabal Therapy      | 3 Darkblast          |
| 3 Forest            | 3 Devastating Dreams | 1 Devastating Dreams |
| 4 Forgotten Cave    | 3 Life from the Loam | 3 Duress             |
| 2 Mountain          | 2 Putrefy            | 1 Hull Breach        |
| 1 Overgrown Tomb    | 4 Seismic Assault    | 3 Krosan Grip        |
| 3 Stomping Ground   |                      | 1 Life from the Loam |
| 4 Tranquil Thicket  | 20 other spells      | 1 Nostalgic Dreams   |
| 3 Wooded Foothills  |                      | 1 Shattering Spree   |
| 24 lands            |                      | 15 sideboard cards   |
| 4 Birds of Paradise |                      |                      |
| 4 Terravore         |                      |                      |
| 4 Wall of Roots     |                      |                      |
| 4 Werebear          |                      |                      |
| 16 creatures        |                      |                      |

**Trevor:** I played my variation of Flores' green-white deck. I felt it beat what I considered to be the best decks and only had trouble with blue-white Counterspell/Wrath decks, which I didn't expect to see a lot of.

| Main Deck<br>60 cards       |                         | Sideboard          |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 8 Forest                    | 4 Call of the Herd      | 3 Krosan Grip      |
| 4 Plains                    | 2 Orim's Chant          | 1 Orim's Chant     |
| 4 Temple Garden             | 2 Sword of Fire and Ice | 4 Plow Under       |
| 2 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree | 3 Umezawa's Jitte       | 3 Rule of Law      |
| 4 Windswept Heath           | 3 Worship               | 3 Tormod's Crypt   |
| 22 lands                    | 14 other spells         | 1 Worship          |
| 4 Boreal Druid              |                         | 15 sideboard cards |
| 4 Eternal Dragon            |                         |                    |
| 4 Exalted Angel             |                         |                    |
| 4 Llanowar Elves            |                         |                    |
| 4 Loxodon Hierarch          |                         |                    |
| 4 Troll Ascetic             |                         |                    |
| 24 creatures                |                         |                    |

**BDM:** How much playtesting did you put in for the PTQ, who did you do it with, and what method do you use to playtest?

**Scott:** My team and I, Team Ramrod, did our playtesting for a few weeks. I started playing Scepter Chant, but quickly found out that Mike's assessment of the deck is correct. It was pretty miserable. As mentioned, we expected a lot of Boros and TEPS, so we played a bunch of sets against the two decks. As to our method, we just play. We have a great group of people which includes teammates and friends of the team.

**Trevor:** I playtested with my teammate Sal (Irken Elite) for about five hours a week for the last month. I also played matches by myself when I could find the time. We had an Aggro Loam build that we liked quite a bit, but Boros still took 50 percent of the games from it so I was looking for a different deck.

**BDM:** How often do you play in PTQs and what is your "pre-game" ritual? What good habits can aspiring PTQ players pick up from you?

**Scott:** I try to play in most PTQs I can get to. I really love playing, and will take most opportunities to do so. The hotel issue is merely one of distance. We drove about four hours to get to this PTQ, so we figured a hotel room and good night's sleep was better than waking up at some ungodly hour. If you know what you are playing the night before, then ALWAYS write your decklist out before hand. It's just one less thing you have to worry about. I don't sleeve prior, as I make it a point to always play new sleeves in a tournament as important as a PTQ. Other than that, a good night's sleep and all that jazz. (Though, our room got about 3-4 hours, that's neither here nor there =P.)

**Trevor:** I usually only play in the local Minneapolis PTQs so that is about four a year. There haven't been any close ones in Des Moines or Fargo in over a year. If I travel more than three hours to a PTQ, I will stay in a hotel the night before to make sure I am well-rested for the tournament. I always have my deck fully built and sleeved before the tournament and only make minor changes at the tournament if the metagame looks considerably different than what I expected. My recommendations are to rest well before the tournament and know your deck and the rest of the decks in the metagame. While I probably only played 30 games with my deck before the tournament, I played hundreds of games with a dozen other decks so I knew how to play against them.

**BDM:** How many players were at the PTQ? How many rounds? What did the field look like when you walked around the room prior to the tournament? Did you make any adjustments to your deck based on this experience?

**Scott:** I don't remember the exact number, but it was enough for seven rounds before the cut. I don't normally do the room walk, for fear of getting "the fear" and changing something without playtesting it first. So, no, no adjustments were made. Just pick the most broken deck and roll with it. =).

**Trevor:** There were 159 players in the PTQ playing eight rounds. It seemed like there were a lot of Trinket Angel decks in the room prior to the tournament and a decent amount of Boros and Desire. Also I saw a lot of **Orim's Chants** in almost any deck playing white – including Boros. I didn't make any changes to my decklist before the tournament.

**BDM:** Can you give me a brief rundown of what decks you faced in the Swiss and how your deck fared? What were your best matchups? What were your worst?

**Scott:** I faced, in order, Ichorid, 5CZoo, Gifts Rock, TEPS, blue-white Post, TEPS, draw with the other 5CZoo player into Top 8. I played 5CZoo in Top 8 (same guy I lost to in Swiss), then blue-white Post, then the other 5CZoo player. My best matchup was, by far, TEPS. Almost all of your cards are good against them, and games 2 and 3 you board in more hate. The blue-white Post and/or Tron decks are definitely the hardest; you either stick (Seismic) Assault and keep it in play, or you lose. That being said, if you can accomplish that part, it's pretty easy to win.

**Trevor:** In the Swiss I played mono-red Goblins, Ichorid, Desire, blue-white Tron, Affinity, and ID'd with blue-white Tron and Desire. My good matchups were anything aggro, although Bill Stark did kill me on turn four with a nuts Affinity draw. My bad matchups were blue-white and Ichorid if I didn't draw **Tormod's Crypts**.

**BDM:** What position were you in going into the Top 8? What were your matchups?

**Scott:** I was in second place after the sixth round – the draw dropped me into eighth seed. I played the No. 1 seed, which was the 5CZoo player I lost to in the Swiss. The winner of our match got the winner of the blue-white Post (My teammate, Daniel Neeley) match with Scepter Chant. My teammate pulled it off (obviously), and I drew **Devastating Dreams** in two of my three games, so that was enough to win. I had to play against Daniel in the top 4. Fortunately for me, he mulliganed Game 3 into a land-light hand and I was able to win a rough matchup. Sorry again, Daniel! =(

This put me into the finals against the 5CZoo deck. The play was tight on both parts, though, I admittedly made a few goofs. However, I drew Dreams in two of my three games, so I got to win. =)

**Trevor:** I was in first place going into the Top 8 with a record of 6-0-2. I beat Trinket Angel in the quarters, Flow Rock in the semis, and the lowa Trinket-Post deck in the finals. I thought the finals would be unwinnable, but I was able to beat blue-white for the second time on the back of **Plow Under**.

**BDM:** What advice do you have for anyone who wants to pick up your deck for upcoming PTQs?

**Scott:** Practice – a lot. It is very important to learn when to dredge, and when to draw off the top of your deck. You need to plan out your turns a few turns ahead of the time. Make sure your Dreams are always for the appropriate amount. Lastly, know that you can Dreams for three with a **Werebear** in play and he will live. I won many games off of this play, and its one of the many reasons **Werebear** is just strictly better than Kudzu.

The most valuable card is clearly **Devastating Dreams**. It does so much, it makes the deck tick. I hear casting **Armageddon** and **Wrath** when you get to keep a monster and have **Life from the Loam** is pretty unfair. There were only two cards out of my 75 that didn't get used, and they were **Hull Breach** and **Shattering Spree**. These still stay, I just didn't play the matchups these cards were relevant in.

**Trevor:** I don't know if my deck will be as good in the future. More people will be prepared for it. I think the blue-white matchup is still bad and blue-white will probably see more play. I think **Worship** was



my best card because of the free wins it gave me, but people will be more prepared for it in the future. **Orim's Chant** was probably the least used card, but it wasn't necessarily bad. It won me one game against Desire and the fog can be useful in stalling a nuts Affinity draw.

**BDM:** *Do you plan on attending Yokohama? Have you ever played on the Pro Tour before? What are your best performances? Who will you be preparing for the tournament with?*

**Scott:** Yessir! It seems pretty silly to turn down a free plane ticket to Japan. I haven't played on the Tour at all before. I'm going to be working really hard with my team, and there are a few other teams I'd like to work with. I hang out at Missetings a lot, so working with the Cymbrogi guys would be awesome. I also respect Stuart Wright's abilities (I've been playing his mono-blue morph deck almost exclusively) and would like to work with him.

As a last note, I'd like to say thanks to my teammates and friends here in Kentucky. I couldn't have done it without you guys. To everyone in Ramrod, the Wise Guys, and everyone else, thank you all.

**Trevor:** I plan to go to Yokohama. My wife really wants to go with me and that will get expensive. This will be my third Pro Tour. I had mediocre (non-Day Two) finishes at the other two. My team Box (with Justin "Googs" Meyer and Nate Siftar) made Top 8 at Grand Prix–Madison and I've had a few other money finishes at Grand Prix. I don't travel to many tournaments, but do well in the ones I do go to. I will probably prepare with my Irken Elite teammates and a few other Minnesotans.

## Add YouTube to Your Training Regimen

Scott Schauf looked to the Worlds competitors for his decklist for his winning weekend in the Charleston PTQ. Don't forget to [look through those lists](#) for some interesting tech – Michael Nurse's Bloth-ready Enduring Ideal deck and Wesimo Al-Bacha's crazy looking blue-white-red deck featuring the rarely seen Snapback.

If you are looking for a better understanding of how the top decks work, [YouTube is the place to go](#). We filmed tutorials on playing Ritual Desire (a.k.a. TEPS), Dirty Kitty, and the still relatively unexplored Sunnyside Up at Worlds to check out the inner workings of each deck.

## Deck Tutorial: Ritual Desire

## Deck Tutorial: Dirty Kitty

## Deck Tutorial: Sunnyside Up

Several thousand viewers have sat down for a table side demonstration of how to play Desire taught by none other than Pro Tour–Honolulu winner Mark Herberholz. Said one viewer, “I am glad I saw this movie!! Because I saw the decklist before, but didn’t know how to play it.. It’s actually quite amazing!! =D”

## Firestarter: Gearing up for Geneva

Video coverage has become an increasingly large part of the Pro Tour coverage. It is obviously much easier to do coverage for an event that involves Constructed decks than Limited play. What angles do you want to see covered in the Geneva footage? What questions can we get answered for you to make you a better Limited player? Sound off in the forums and I will do my best to see that your questions get answered.

*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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