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# Taking Control with Wafo-Tapa

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, April 27, 2007



The first time I ever remember hearing about Guillaume Wafo-Tapa was after Pro Tour–Columbus in 2005 when Pierre Canali shocked the world with his Affinity deck. In the Top 8 profiles for that event, Pierre shared the design credit for the deck with a pair of Guillaume's, Matignon and Wafo-Tapa (although it was incorrectly transcribed as Wago Tapa at the time.). Two years later, Mssr. Wafo-Tapa was [hoisting his own trophy in Yokohama](#) and was kind enough to spend some time with me discussing how he got from being Canali's lab partner for Columbus to the Yokohama spotlight.

Like most **Magic** players, the 25-year-old from Nantes, France started playing **Magic** in school. It wasn't long before his group was playing the game every free chance they had, but it wasn't until he graduated high school that he took his play to the next level.

"I moved to a bigger town to pursue my studies at the University," explained Wafo-Tapa. "That's when and where I discovered organized play. I met some players in the area that were often going to PTQs and I got immediately interested."

I had assumed that, like his friend Pierre, Columbus was Guillaume's first Pro Tour experience but Wafo-Tapa actually picked up his first Pro Points in Barcelona during the 2001 season. He claimed that he was ill-prepared for the level of the draft competition. There was a smattering of additional appearances before he experienced success on the Pro Tour – even if it was just someone else playing the deck he had a hand in designing. Not that he played that deck himself...



Wafo-Tapa went home from Yokohama \$40,000 richer.

"I'm a control player at heart," he confessed to the surprise of absolutely nobody. "I rarely play aggressive decks in tournaments. I played a variant of awakening control. I believe the deck was really strong but sadly due to poor plays on my part, once again, I couldn't achieve Day 2."

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

### Guillaume Wafo-Tapa

Pro Tour–Columbus  

Main Deck 60 cards	Sideboard
4 Yavimaya Coast	3 Chalice of the Void
10 Island	3 Engineered Explosives
6 Forest	1 Dust Bowl
3 Treetop Village	1 Masticore
23 lands	1 Fact or Fiction
4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	1 Naturalize
3 Eternal Witness	1 Capsize
7 creatures	1 Stroke of Genius
2 Living Wish	1 Eternal Witness
3 Moment's Peace	2 Unknown Cards
4 Awakening	
4 Counterspell	
4 Accumulated Knowledge	
3 Fact or Fiction	
4 Intuition	
4 Cunning Wish	
2 Condescend	
30 other spells	
	15 sideboard cards

Guillaume languished in the PTQ ranks for the rest of the 2005 season. Although he did close out the year with a Top 16 finish at [Grand Prix–Bilbao](#), piloting the same Mirari's Wake deck he used at a PTQ weeks earlier to earn an invite to [Pro Tour–Honolulu](#) where his name would become part of the Standard landscape.

### Guillaume Wafo-Tapa - Counter Mizzet

Pro Tour–Honolulu - 12th Place  

Main Deck	Sideboard

60 cards		
4 Steam Vents	3 Boomerang	4 Pyroclasm
4 Shivan Reef	4 Repeal	4 Giant Solifuge
1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge	3 Mana Leak	1 Blood Moon
10 Island	4 Remand	1 Pithing Needle
1 Shinka, the Bloodsoaked Keep	4 Electrolyze	2 Threads of Disloyalty
1 Miren, the Moaning Well	4 Tidings	3 Shattering Spree
3 Mountain	2 Confiscate	
<hr/>		
24 lands	4 Hinder	15 sideboard cards
	4 Rewind	
<hr/>		
2 Keiga, the Tide Star	32 other spells	
2 Niv-Mizzet, the Firemind		
<hr/>		
4 creatures		

The deck was called Counter-Mizzet in the coverage but after the tournament the deck emerged from Mike Flores's deck lab (sans the red) as Blue-white Wafo-Tapa. Even if most players did not know the quiet French player who originated the deck, they were well aware of his name from playing against his namesake deck at FNM. Ironically Guillaume himself was unfamiliar with the updated version.

"I remember having seen the article on Star City," he explained. "Unfortunately, since I was not a member, I could not read it at the time. Then I forgot about it, so I never got to see it."

White Wafo-Tapa		.dec	
Mike Flores			
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard	
6 Island	1 Debtors' Knell	4 Azorius Guildmage	
1 Plains	3 Boomerang	4 Faith's Fetters	
4 Adarkar Wastes	4 Hinder	1 Boomerang	
4 Azorius Chancery	4 Mana Leak	4 Condemn	
2 Ghost Quarter	4 Remand	2 Ghost Quarter	
4 Hallowed Fountain	4 Spell Snare	<hr/>	
1 Mikokoro, Center of the Sea	4 Compulsive Research	15 sideboard cards	
1 Minamo, School at Water's Edge	3 Tidings		
1 Miren, the Moaning Well	4 Wrath of God		
1 Oboro, Palace in the Clouds			
<hr/>			
25 lands	31 other spells		
<hr/>			
3 Keiga, the Tide Star			
1 Yosei, the Morning Star			
<hr/>			
4 creatures			

In 2006, Guillaume broke new ground as he achieved the first Top 8 of his career at [Grand Prix-Torino](#) and quickly followed it up with another before making it to the Top 32 of [Pro Tour-Kobe](#). Not only was Torino his first Top 8, but it was the first time Guillaume experienced success in Limited at the highest levels of competition.

"I was very happy. I had never prepared that much for a Limited PT before and it paid off," explained Guillaume, but he also confessed he is happy with the label of Constructed specialist. "I like Limited but I prefer Constructed, and consequently I spend more time playing Constructed so yes, I would say I'm more a Constructed specialist."

That reputation was cemented at [Worlds at the end of the 2006 season](#), when another of his fiendish creations became a Standard standard – Dralnu du Louvre. Guillaume went 5-1 with the blue-black build but that was the only portion of his weekend that went well. He found the deck almost immediately after looking at the *Time Spiral* spoiler.

"I remember seeing *Mystical Teachings* and *Teferi*," Guillaume recalled very fondly. "I couldn't believe they made a card as good as *Teferi*. This is such a perfect card for the control player – and *Mystical Teachings* along with it? I remember thinking, 'Well I probably know what I'm gonna be playing in standard for the next two years now'."

Guillaume knew – putting any metagame considerations to the side – that the deck would be good. It was the control player's dream since its pilot never really had to tap out on his own turn. Thanks to *Teferi* everything could be played – and with *Teachings* tutored for – at instant speed.

Despite his poor finish to the season in Paris, the combination of a Top 16, a Top 32, and two Grand Prix Top 8

appearances was enough to propel him up to Level 4 in the Pro Players Club, which locked him into being more than qualified for all of this season's events. He made quick use of his level, kicking off the season with the second Top 16 finish of his career.

Once again Guillaume found success with the 40-card decks, this time in [Geneva](#). During my walk to the booth in Yokohama, I ran into Dane Young an American player who finished in the Top 16 last weekend. He was not sure how he should feel – encouraged or discouraged – about his finish after being so close to a Top 8. I posed the question to Guillaume about his near misses in Geneva and Honolulu.

"Definitely encouraged," he replied. "After my awful Day Two at Worlds, I lost a bit of faith, asking myself how it had gone so wrong. So I was happy to make Top 16 in Geneva."

Next up for Guillaume was Pro Tour–Yokohama. So just how does a Constructed specialist prepare for a new Constructed format? I wanted to get a look inside his process of deck design, as well as when he knew he was a talented deck designer.

"I began by building a few decks on my own," he said. "It's important to design your decks first, before you see what works on **Magic Online** or what others have done. Because after that your ideas are biased. After that I gathered with Pierre Canali, Bastien Perez and Jonathan Rispal to test for a week. And finally we tested with the Ruel brothers near the end. Of course, MTGO was a part of the equation all along the way.

"I like to play with my own decks or at least decks under the radar," he continued. "I saw pretty quickly I could do well with them. I guess that's when I realized I was a good deck builder. I like cards that pose a deckbuilding challenge like **Wild Pair** – such an interesting card to build around. I dedicated a lot of time to it but sadly we couldn't find a build that did well against Dralnu in the block.

"Like I said, I almost always play control decks. But of course, if one day I think I can break a format with a combo or agro deck, I would play it. And sometimes, even when playing control, you're the beatdown."

His last comment segued perfectly into my next question. During the lunch break Guillaume lamented the presence of **Triskelavus** and **Academy Ruins** in his deck, citing that as the only change he would make to the list. Despite those comments he went on to win a critical game against Mark Herberholz in the semifinals on the back of those two cards.

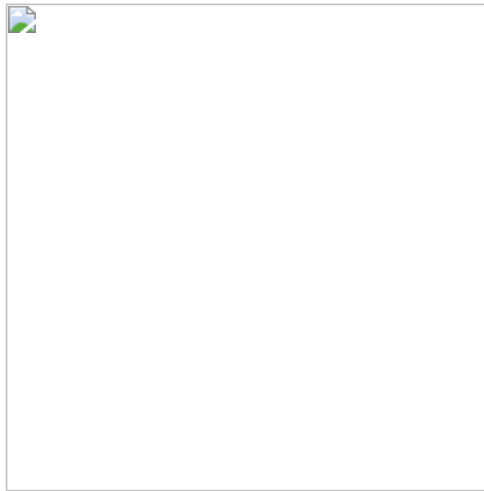
"**Triskelavus** is essentially amazing against White Weenie," Guillaume explained. "And it's good against control after sideboarding because the **Damnations** go. I didn't expect it to be so good against Mark, but I think it essentially made Game 2. The first game was more luck on my part by drawing **Urza's Factory** before Mark. Now with White Weenie out of the equation due to its poor results, I think **Triskelavus** has to go too."

Guillaume had not given much thought to what changes he would make to the deck with **Future Sight** as he still has a Grand Prix in this exact format to worry about in a couple of weeks. He did admit to being drawn to Heezy's maindeck configuration in recasting the deck for the post-PT environment.

"There are not really big differences," he said of the two decks. "Our decks are pretty close. Mark opted to maindeck a lot of 1-ofs to tutor for while I preferred to keep a straight deck. Though now, I would probably add the white in the main like he did at least for **Pull from Eternity** because I would expect a lot of **Aeon Chroniclers** maindeck."

## Relive the Finals

Did you miss the live webcast? Don't have time to watch the full 90-minute archive video of [Guillaume Wafo-Tapa dispatching Kazuya Mitamura in the finals](#) of Pro Tour–Yokohama? Check out our Finals Highlights, fresh from the editing bay of Mr. Evan Erwin.



*Players may have been familiar with the name, but now there's a face to go with Wafo-Tapa.*



## Finals: Game 1

**Finals: Game 2**

**Finals: Game 3**

## **Finals: Game 4**

### **Firestarter: Blocking out the Block PTQs**

Several of the Tournament Center video features Randy Buehler and I did in Yokohama were deck techs, including three of the Top 8 decks.

### **Mono-red with Raphael Levy**

### **Blue-black Control with Mark Herberholz**

## Angry Germit with Sebastian Thaler

Looking at these, the [other deck tech pieces](#), the [Top 8 decklists](#), and the decks that [did well on Day Two](#), which deck do you think you are most likely to use as a foundation for the upcoming PTQ season? What cards does *Future Sight* offer that you are excited to add to any of these decks? What new decks seem viable? As always the forums are yours to share your thoughts and tech with the world.

*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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