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Not-Ready-For-Prime-Time Players

Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
Friday, June 15,
2007



North American Regionals weekend is in the books and a fair amount of decklists and results are already available in the always amazing Tournament Center. I actually got play this weekend at the Regionals tournament in New Jersey but sadly—although predictably—you will not find my name or decklist anywhere in the Top 8 results. You can find [Top 8 decklists here](#) and there will be more added as results trickle in. In the meanwhile I want to share two decklists that didn't quite get there, but had interesting cores that I feel will be worthwhile to keep in mind for upcoming Standard events both online and off.

The deck I played was a Billy Moreno creation that he originally built for one of the Top8Magic.com mock tournaments in preparation for Regionals weekend. His deck was essentially an experiment in card selection over redundancy. Billy took the established—and somewhat successful—Perilous Storm deck and reduced the basic deck down to 48 or 49 cards (depending on the iteration). [Mishra's Baubles](#), [Street Wraiths](#), and [Edge of Autumn](#) were all free cycling cards that essentially reduced the size of your core deck.

What was truly exciting about the deck to me was the engine of [Flagstones of Trokair](#) and [Edge of Autumn](#) to get value off of the cycle effect. There were actually no basic lands in the deck to fetch with the Edge—although Billy now thinks maybe there should be one—but when you cycled it on a Flagstones, it allowed you to fetch red mana with [Sacred Foundry](#), blue mana with [Hallowed Fountain](#), green with [Temple Garden](#), or black with [Godless Shrine](#) while drawing a card from the cycle effect.

The green and black mana may seem a little puzzling in [Hatching Plans](#) deck but they were there to support a transformative sideboard that included [Tarmogoyfs](#) and [Dark Confidants](#). If I were to play the deck again, I would almost certainly move the Confidants into the starting 60 configuration over the [Street Wraiths](#) as I sided the Wraiths out for Bob in virtually every game. The [Pacifisms](#) were great against opposing [Tarmogoyfs](#) and [Korlashs](#) but I did not end up playing the one [Bound in Silence](#) despite the potential of a 7/8 'Goyf which I had been playing online.

Here is the deck I played:



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RULES

RULES

Brian David-Marshall, BillyPlans New Jersey Regionals, 37th Place		
Main Deck 60 cards		Sideboard
1 Gemstone Caverns	2 Ignite Memories	1 Empty the Warrens
1 Breeding Pool	2 Claws of Gix	1 Ignite Memories
1 Hallowed Fountain	3 Empty the Warrens	1 Gemstone Caverns
1 Watery Grave	3 Hatching Plans	4 Pacifism
1 Temple Garden	3 Perilous Research	4 Tarmogoyf
1 Godless Shrine	3 Edge of Autumn	4 Dark Confidant
1 Sacred Foundry	4 Chromatic Star	
2 Gemstone Mine	4 Mishra's Bauble	15 sideboard cards
3 Steam Vents	4 Rite of Flame	
4 Flagstones of Trokair	4 Seething Song	
	4 Lotus Bloom	
16 lands	36 other spells	
4 Street Wraith		
4 Storm Entity		
8 creatures		

The [Chromatic Stars](#) were a late swap over [Sleight of Hand](#) after the deck's 4-1 performance at our mock tournament began to disseminate via our podcast. I loved the Stars once the game got past the first turn or so,

but whenever I was faced with a tough mulligan decision on an opening hand with Star I wished it was a **Sleight of Hand**. Maybe they should both be in with the Baubles getting the boot.

Storm Entity was an all-star in playtesting. I managed to get a first-turn 7/7 haste creature one game. I had to go down to eight to do it but I managed to pull it out from there. In case you are wondering how that happened, here's the story: I cycled three **Street Wraiths** to set up the hand, played a **Steam Vents** untapped, which brought me down to 12 before I had done anything. I played two Baubles, one **Claws of Gix**, two **Rites of Flame**, and a **Seething Song** to power out my guy and burned for four more when I attacked. Fun stuff.

The Entities never really showed up for me except for one game where I made a 7/7 and 8/8 on turn four against a control deck, only to find out we had started our match too early and were being re-paired. There were a couple of games where they served to soften up an opponent—Baubles, Rites, **Storm Entity** for a 3/3 haste on turn one—but I never had any in-game exciting turns with them. They may be an example of the danger of cool things and could be replaced by additional copies of Ignite, Empty, or more card manipulation.

It's really hard to say as I took a first round draw with Eric Wennokor—probably the only player in the room with as much **Magic** under his belt as me. He was playing a **Greater Good** deck that had **Wrath of God** for my goblins, sideboarded **Circle of Protection: Red** for my Ignite Memories, and had bigger guys than my sideboard creature plan. We split the first two games and I was on my heels in the third game when time was called. In hindsight I should have conceded the match rather than fall into dreaded draw bracket. It seemed every player I faced had either life gain, COP Red, **Hide // Seek**, or some other card that was generally bad for my deck.

I picked up my first loss to Eli Kassis, who was playing a very interesting take on Zoo that had many of the same elements as Billy's **Hatching Plans** build—**Street Wraith**, **Edge of Autumn** on Flagstones, etc.—to power up very large **Tarmogoyfs**. Eli's rogue sensibilities did not end there as he built a fair portion of his deck around **Kavu Predator** with **Fiery Justice** and **Grove of the Burnwillows** to make it loom over the red zone. Eli finished in 19th place but was still in the running for a Top 8 berth in the final rounds of the event. If you are looking for an interesting take on Zoo, you might want to tool around with Eli's intriguing build:



Eli Kassis, Fiery Zoo		
New Jersey Regionals, 19th Place		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
4 Grove of the Burnwillows	4 Seal of Fire	3 Aven Mindcensor
1 Llanowar Reborn	4 Lightning Helix	1 Jotun Grunt
1 Forest	3 Chromatic Star	2 Tormod's Crypt
2 Temple Garden	2 Char	3 Loxodon Hierarch
1 Sacred Foundry	3 Call of the Herd	2 Riftsweeper
4 Stomping Ground	3 Edge of Autumn	2 Seal of Primordium
4 Flagstones of Trokair	3 Fiery Justice	2 Sulfur Elemental
3 Gemstone Mine		
20 lands	22 other spells	15 sideboard cards
3 Watchwolf		
4 Tarmogoyf		
4 Kavu Predator		
4 Kird Ape		
2 Jotun Grunt		
1 Street Wraith		
18 creatures		

Quick Hits from Regionals

Just taking a quick stroll through the Regionals results page, it seemed like every other deck was either **Dragonstorm**, **Gruul**, or **Dredge**. The latter seemed to do much better than predicted especially when you consider that it was played by a very small percentage of the field—at least by what I saw in New Jersey.

Speaking of **New Jersey**... Mike Flores and Steve Sadin both missed the invite instead of the preferred missing of invites once they made Top 8. Sadin's Gruul deck was designed to beat up on Gruul decks across the table but ran afoul of Adam Levitt's **Dragonstorm** in the last round despite the **Riftsweeper** and **Cryoclast** package in his sideboard. This deck has been spitting out **Future Sight** packs in 8-man queues online for the past week.

REGIONALS DECKLISTS

- United States**
- [California - Los Angeles Area](#)
 - [Colorado - Denver](#)
 - [Connecticut - Hartford](#)
 - [Florida - Miami Area](#)
 - [Florida - Orlando](#)
 - [Georgia - Atlanta](#)
 - [Illinois - Chicago](#)

Mike alluded to [his tale of woe in Thursday's column](#) but suffice it to say that Mike would most likely be preparing for Nats right now instead of Seneca Hobler had he simply not tapped his **Serrated Arrows** during his own turn. The deck Mike had planned to play up until the night before—a Rakdos deck—ended up qualifying Kai Davis in Oregon after some tinkering by Soggy Pickles's own Gavin Verhey.

[In California](#), Richard Feldman's Suicide Squad deck took second place while Hall of Fame-eligible Kurt Burgner qualified for Nationals playing Gruul. Kurt has three career Pro Tour Top 8 appearances and was a teammate of Alan Comer's on the second-place Team Game Empire at Pro Tour–Washington D.C. in the 1999-00 season.

Despite being qualified for Nationals on rating, Patrick Chapin decided to play in [Michigan Regionals](#) to get his competitive juices flowing before teaming with his one-time protégé Mark Herberholz in San Diego. Patrick, a.k.a. The Innovator, not only proved himself to be in fine tournament form, but he walked away with the best record in the tournament. Joining him in that Top 8 was Grand Prix–Austin Top 8 competitor Michael Jacob.

A Solar Flare-style deck took three of the four invites to Nationals that were available for the taking in the cutthroat [Ohio Valley Regionals](#). Gruul walked away with the title but Cedric Phillips led a pack of control players to the next three slots.

"Three people did qualify with Solar Flare at Ohio Regionals," confirmed the Brainburst.com columnist. "I was one of them along with one of my best friends Justin George. Justin and I got ready for the tournament together at our local store Matrix Games. Turns out Justin and I got paired against each other in Round 2. After I gave him a huge beating (a.k.a. he got flooded both games) we both ended up qualifying so everything worked out."

Cedric, who writes a weekly column about the **Magic Online** metagame, feels that Solar Flare and **Dragonstorm** are the two best decks in Standard at the moment. **Dragonstorm** has continued to post solid results since it won the World Championships last year, but why the strong feelings for Solar Flare? Cedric explained (as if the three berths weren't a good enough argument):

"I feel this way because every card in Solar Flare is so powerful on its own. There isn't a lot of synergy in Solar Flare. It is just 37 extremely powerful cards that get the job done. Yes even the signets! I feel **Remand** to be the worst card in the deck. When **Remand** is the worst card in any deck, you know you have a good deck on your hands. Justin's version cut it and he still earned an invite!"

After last year's Regionals I conducted a roundtable interview that included Conrad Kolos, who had managed to qualify at Regionals for the second straight year. He just missed making the Top 8 at Nationals but will have a chance to improve on that performance this year as he once again clawed his way to a Nationals invite with a Korlash deck in [Pennsylvania's regional in Philadelphia](#).

And your Road Warrior is...

Raphael Levy.

Raph was a clear favorite among the voters, garnering [43 percent of the votes](#). Based on the feedback in the forums, voters placed a huge premium on Levy's ridiculous string of consecutive Pro Tours attended that stretches back over a decade. The fact that he was able to win back-to-back Grand Prix in North America and the Far East didn't hamper his case either.

For Levy, the win represented a huge monkey-ectomy. Despite his stellar career which was recently honored with an induction into the Hall of Fame, Levy had never been to an Invitational.

"I guess it's a magical year for me," beamed Levy when he heard the news. "Almost everything I had been waiting and fighting for has happened. Guess the world is gonna have to watch out in the next events!"

Fittingly, Levy was gearing up for a two-week trip to North America that will take him from Montreal to San Diego. That seemed like nothing compared to the Dallas-Singapore-Amsterdam itinerary that helped him win this ballot, but with the addition of the Invitational to his fall schedule Raph is facing a gauntlet of events that makes even the newly crowned Road Warrior wary.

"The crazy period is going to be October and November," Raph explained. "It's about three times worse than the Dallas/Singapore/Amsterdam/Kyoto schedule."

He goes from PT Valencia starting on the 10th of October straight to the Invitational in Germany on the 17th. The next few weekends see him in Thailand, Poland, Japan, and North America for GPs before coming to New York for the World Championships after a weekend at home in France.

This week's contest is the always controversial [Resident Genius ballot](#), which features four Pro Tour winners, one finalist, countless Top 8 finishes, and proficiency with both 40- and 60-card decks. Click on the image to the right to find the ballot and support your favorite mad scientist.

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- [Michigan - Detroit](#)
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- [Nebraska - Lincoln](#)
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Firestarter: Regional Fallout

What stands out for you from the Top 8 Regional decklists? How do you think these results will affect the Standard PEs, MSS events, and the FNM crowd in the coming weeks? When you are done looking through the results here you can go to the forums and share your analysis.



*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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