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Meet the Magic Super Series Champ

Brian David-Marshall
 The Week That Was
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 2007



I could only imagine William Forsythe and John Goodman screaming in Raising Arizona when Steve Sadin described him and Matt Boccio driving back to their hotel during [Magic Weekend](#). It was the night before Nationals, and after vacillating between a variety of decks Steve had finally decided to dance with that one that brought him to the party and just play with Gruul.

I am not entirely clear on who was responsible for the care of little Nathan Arizona, but apparently Matt was the last to hold the little bundle of Gruul. He rested it on roof of the car as they prepared to leave the venue, where it was forgotten until the dye pack exploded all over the auto's interior. Much like Gale and Eville Snoats slinking back to prison, Steve showed up for round one of Nationals with his face stained blue and a copy of Gerry Thompson's [Momentary Blink](#) deck in tow, and an 0-4 record in his immediate future.



I don't know if it was any solace or if it just provoked another round of screaming but Steve's first deck choice was validated on Sunday when East Coast PTQ fixture Greg Poverelli cruised to the MSS Championship title with the deck he called Sadin Update. The deck provided him with just the right cocktail of burn and creatures—check out [his narrow, Craig Jones-inspired victory in the semifinals](#)—to take some of the sting out of passing up an opportunity to play at Pro Tour-Kobe last year with \$10,000 toward his college education.

It should also take some of the sting out of the next four years for his parents since the 17-year-old Flushing, New York resident is just wrapping up his senior year of high school. Greg has been on something of roll when it comes to **Magic** over the past year. He already had close to \$2,000 on account for college after finishing in the Top 16 of last season's JSS Championships, made the finals of the New York State Championships, and won the PTQ for Kobe.

While he still has a year of MSS eligibility, Greg was hoping that would change by the time the Pro Tour rolled into his hometown this winter. "I'm trying to Q for Worlds on rating," he explained. "I need about 25 or so more composite points."

Rating was how he qualified for the **Magic** Super Series this season as he had been slugging it out all year on the PTQ level and not really pursuing MSS qualifiers. In fact, a hefty chunk of that rating came while he was trying to qualify for Nationals. "I came in 11th in the huge NJ Regionals playing the Dredge deck, which basically got me the last few points to secure the Q."



Poverelli, posing with his giant check.

It was also at that Regionals tournament where Greg first became aware of the Gruul list that ended up earning him the MSS title. "I was next to Sadin a lot at the top tables of Regionals and saw the deck and liked it from the start. Going in on Friday I was telling friends playing in Nats and the MSS it was the best deck in the format but it was extremely overlooked," said Greg who found the deck quite resilient in testing.

Greg said that he did most of his testing online with friends, explaining, "We tested mostly Solar Flare, Angelfire, Blue-Red-White Blink, Rakdos, and Gruul. I expected there to be a lot of Sadin update, but I think I was the only person playing it. It did really well in testing. It had absolutely no matchups seemingly worse than 50/50 except for Blue-Green-White Blink, which I didn't expect a lot of."

After last season's strong finish and his performances at tournaments throughout the year, Greg felt like he would do well but did not want to get his hopes up about a Top 8 in such a big tournament. He just wanted to play tight and remain confident.

"On Day 1 I wanted to be in the least 6-3 and would have been very happy with 7-2," said Greg who was 8-1 at the end of those first nine rounds. "I expected a lot of aggro mirror matches but I played against eight control decks—many of which were complete blowouts. Blink and Angelfire were everywhere. While most people think it's a bad matchup,

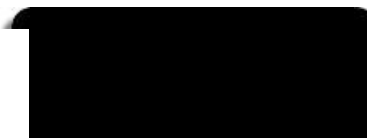
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since they are tooled with *Aven Riftwatcher*, *Faith's Fetters*, and *Lightning Helix*, *Cryoclast* and *Tin Street Hooligan* slow them down way too much and *Manabarbs* simply locks games out."

Ironically the one matchup that scared Greg was the deck that Sadin ended up playing for Nationals. "One of the last minute decks from Kentucky that was played was the Gabe Walls Blink list, which destroys the mono-red deck. Luckily I avoided it."

Despite his recent success at Constructed and his desire to play on the Pro Tour, Greg is going to skip the remaining local PTQs for Valencia. "I'm going to sit on my 2017 rating. My limited is only at 1905, but if I can gain roughly 45 points in the Limited season before Worlds I'll Q on top 50 Composite for North America—I'm currently 96th. It won't be easy but I have the best results in Limited and I'm confident. I barely missed Qing for Valencia, but I intend to go to all the U.S. GPs to try to Q, especially for Worlds. If all fails I could still play the MSS next year, but I'm hoping to get back on the tour. After not being able to go to Kobe I'd like another shot."



Next Stop: Malaysia – Five Questions with Scott Larabee

The first stop on the 2008 Pro Tour schedule has been announced and just in case you thought Greg was counting his Limited chickens before they hatched, Scott Larabee has confirmed that the first PTQ season will be Limited. As for where those precious airline tickets contained within the fabled blue envelopes will be taking the winners of said PTQs, the Pro Tour is coming to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The country has previously played host to an Invitational and multiple Grand Prix events but never a Pro Tour. I caught up with frequent column guest Larabee for Five Questions about the upcoming season.

1. Why Kuala Lumpur?

Scott: We go to Asia Pacific each year.... This has usually been Japan. As we have been running some events in more exotic locales, Kuala Lumpur seemed a great choice.

2. What makes it such a great choice?

Scott: It is a place we have never been with a Pro Tour and has quite an active **Magic** community. It's probably the most "different" place we have taken the Pro Tour to date. I hope all players that are Q'd will come and enjoy the experience.



3. When will we know the rest of the schedule—and more importantly the formats?

Scott: Soon. There are a few more things that we need to take care of on the remaining events before we can make them public. Everything should be announced no later than late September / early October.

4. Is this year going to be heavily Limited or Constructed or something else entirely? Two years ago it was a heavy Limited year and this year was heavily Constructed. What about 2008?

Scott: We are still finalizing plans, but things should be more "even" in 2008. The KL PTQ round will be *Lorwyn* Limited and PT–KL will be *Lorwyn / Morningtide* booster draft. The rest will have to wait for the announcement.

5. And no word about plans for team formats?

Scott: Not yet. We are still reviewing the results of Pro Tour–San Diego, weighing the pros and cons of the 2HG format at a Pro level.

2007 Magic Invitational: Who's Your Favorite?

It seems a little odd to call this week's ballot the [Fan Favorite ballot](#) when the voters have already demonstrated a fondness for [The Magic Show's](#) Evan Erwin. Despite his never having been to a Pro Tour the voters have spoken and rewarded Evan's weekly efforts in bringing **Magic** to life via his YouTube web show about the game on [last week's Storyteller ballot](#). Congrats Evan, and if you have a sense of humor about the whole hullabaloo you will call your Invitational card submission Irving Urza.



The ballot generated a fair amount of heat on the message boards and seemed to shake out into a Pros vs. Joes battle with Pro Players past and present arguing for the purity of the Invitational as an All-Star game despite Aaron Forsythe's [recent column](#) where he expressed a desire to turn it into something more akin to "Dancing With the Stars." No matter what side of the argument you were on it was one of the most voted upon ballots so far, and the forums were must-reads all week long.

This week is a potpourri of candidates from previous ballots to round out the last ballot determined by public vote. Head to the Invitational and [cast your vote](#) for your favorite player!

Firestarter: Stealth Tech

If you look at Greg Poverelli's winning decklist from the MSS Champs you find his secret weapon for the control match-ups—the recently reprinted **Manabarbs**. What other hidden gems are lurking in *Tenth* waiting to be exploited? Click the link below to discuss!

*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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