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# Follow-up Friday

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, October 26, 2007



There is just so much stuff to talk about this week. First off there were two pretty major tournaments last week. The first was the [2007 Magic Invitational](#) and the other was [Grand Prix—Brisbane](#). The two tournaments have been intertwined not just because they fell on the same weekend but because of the choices players had to make in order to be at one or the other.

Tomoharu Saito donned the metaphorical black hat when he chose to attend Brisbane instead of accepting an Invitational berth voted upon by the fans. With only two points between him and second-place Kenji Tsumura in the Player of the Year race, Saito saw the GP as an opportunity to pad the lead over the winner of the Limited Master ballot (since we all know that a person who stops his opponent from passing during his upkeep without paying for a Pact would never skip out on an Invitational berth).

I am not sure what Saito's expected Pro Point payout is for a GP—he does have seven lifetime Grand Prix Top 8s—but I have to imagine that earning only one point at a 233-player Grand Prix was a disappointment for him. He was sitting on five wins coming into Day Two but apparently had some early struggles with the new draft format and posted a 3-3 draft record, finishing in 42nd place.

Tsumura, whose Invitational submission was called "I Hate Pacts," finished two matches off the best record after 15 rounds in Germany. Both Rich Hoan and Tiago Chan posted 11-4 records to advance to the finals while Kenji was grouped in four-person scrum of 9-6 records that included Shuhei Nakamura, last year's winner Antoine Ruel, and Paulo Vitor Damo da Rosa. Kenji was solid in every format but Choose Your Own Standard, where he posted his only negative record, but 2-1 records across the rest of the formats were not enough. Kenji's quest to save people from their own Pacts fell short and now he will be back to pursuing the Player of the Year title, no doubt happy to have lost minimal ground to Saito in Brisbane.

## Live from Bangkok: Five Questions with Portugal's Finest

Tiago Chan went on to defeat Richie Hoan in the finals of the Invitational and earned the right to have his submission, Denying Channel, made into an actual **Magic** card sometime next year. Many of the players in my local playgroup were actually pulling for Tiago during the tournament because they felt his card submission was the one they most wanted to see turned into a **Magic** card.

Tiago headed straight to Bangkok, Thailand, after his win and somehow we managed to synch up our clocks for five questions about his Invitational submission and the various formats of the tournament.

### 1. What was the origin of your Invitational submission? How led you to the idea for the card?

**Tiago:** I wanted a spell that could act as a land in the early game, or whenever I needed one, to reduce the chances of mana screw in **Magic**. My initial idea was to have a split card; one half a land that produces colorless, and on the other half a "Cancel" for one extra mana. It was called Magical Land / Magic from Land, which got a huge amount of laughter from everyone whose native language is English. I exposed this idea to Mark Rosewater and his designer experience and advice helped me make my idea into a simpler and cleaner card: a land that could be channeled for  $\{2}\{C}\{C}\{C}$ , to counter a target spell. It's easier for rules to have it like this, rather than a spell that tries to be a land in play somehow. For deckbuilding purposes, I wouldn't treat it as a land, but rather as a spell that can sometimes prevent you from mana screw. I decided to call the land a Channel, because not only the ability is like Channel from *Saviors of Kamigawa*, but Chan is also a word inside Channel.

### 2. Do you have any guesses as to what will happen to it over the course of development?

**Tiago:** Even though I tried to make it as fair as possible, they will probably make it a lot worse, and put a picture of Ryo Ogura or Terry Soh on it. I wouldn't mind that much if they add some drawbacks to the land, making it Legendary or coming into play tapped. That would add more decisions, like if you had one **Island**, **Denying Channel** and **Thirst for Knowledge**, on which turn do you play the Channel? If they decide to elevate the **Counterspell** cost, I will probably try to submit something else. But I'm hoping the card can pass playtesting as it's only a better version of **Last Word**, which was marginally played—at best.

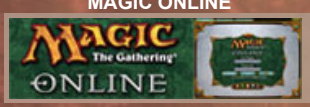


| Name                   | Pro Points |
|------------------------|------------|
| 1. Tomoharu Saito      | 54         |
| 2. Kenji Tsumura       | 51         |
| 3. Guillaume Wafo-Tapa | 48         |
| 4. Shingou Kurihara    | 46         |
| 5. Paul Cheon          | 41         |
| 5. Raphael Levy        | 41         |
| 7. Mark Herberholz     | 38         |
| 7. Olivier Ruel        | 38         |
| 9. Mike Hron           | 37         |
| 10. Shuhei Nakamura    | 37         |

**PRODUCTS**

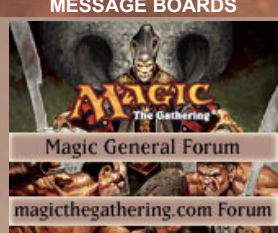
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**RULES**



**3. You 3-0'd the Auction format with a deck that started with 8 cards in hand and 25 life. How essential is it to get a full hand of cards in the Auction format? It seems like going down below seven cards almost never pays off. What was your strategy going into the auction?**

**Tiago:** It depends on how aggressively the auction is going. If everyone is sticking around 7 cards with someone occasionally going to 6 cards, then the advantage you obtain from (taking a weaker deck with a large starting hand size) isn't that big. Going into the action, my favourite deck was the Illusions/*Donate* control, even though I didn't playtest any of them. I would be happy with any good bargain on one of the decks that looked like real decks from the past. After the three first decks were bid on, I realized there wouldn't be good bargains, as those decks were won with 5, 6 and 5 cards respectively and some amount of life.

I decided to stay until the end to get a deck with 8 cards and 25 life and do some bidding to lower the good decks to at least six cards. There were three decks I didn't want to end up with: *Minotaurs*, *Choose your Destiny*, and *Legendary Puppets*. Since if I stayed until the end, I had to pick between two, it was very possible to get stuck with two of them. So when it was my turn to select a deck to bid on, there were still many bidders without decks, so I nominated *Legendary of Puppets*, hoping someone would get it. I got rid of it, and as I suspected, some people thought *Choose your Own Destiny* was good because you could force your opponent into bad decisions, if his life was too low, so fortunately that deck was also taken before the end. I chose *Transformers* because it had 4 *Wrath of God* and 4 *Disenchant*, and very few creatures, and also because I didn't know about the *Brand* interaction.



*Chan hoists the trophy from the 2007 Invitational.*

**4. I was always a big fan of the *Saproling Cluster* deck. Why did you pick it for *Choose Your Own Standard*?**

**Tiago:** I used to play the *Cluster* deck at local tournaments back in 2000, and it was the deck I used for my first Pro Tour, *Worlds 2000*. I went 4-1-1, drawing my first round against a young kid playing in his first Pro Tour too. His name was Frank Karsten. For the *Choose Your Own Standard*, I wanted to play a combo deck, because there was no metagame to test against. I figured combo would be a good choice because you just go for it, and your playtesting against an unknown field is goldfishing. All the good combos were banned. This was one of the few remaining, and it had the nostalgic element of being my favourite deck at that time, and the deck I used for the first time in a Pro Tour.

**5. How much difference is there in playing *Vintage* and playing other formats? Have you played *Vintage* before this event and how did you feel having to play the deciding match out in the *Vintage* format?**

**Tiago:** *Vintage* is a very special format, which requires some different skills from the *Magic* I'm used to playing. The difference from *Vintage* to modern Constructed formats is almost as big as from *Standard* to *Limited*. I had never played *Vintage* before; my first match was Round 13 of the *Invitational*. My first game was the night before the *Vintage* portion.

I was really uncomfortable playing *Vintage* in the finals, I wanted badly for it to be the last format, so that we could maybe avoid having to play it. I made some mistakes during the *Vintage* finals due to not knowing properly how the decks exactly work, and by lack of experience playing the format. I did a play on my intuition, that was clearly wrong, but I got lucky. If there weren't so many different Constructed formats in the Pro Tour schedule, and if there wasn't that adversity of getting the *Power Nine*, I think I would enjoy playing *Vintage* regularly.

## Thailand Double Feature: Five Questions with Andre Coimbra

Tiago's roommate in Thailand is another of Portugal's finest players, Andre Coimbra. Andre has been a frequent guest of this column and with good reason. He has been living the Level 6 lifestyle on a Level 4 player's budget. Andre was disappointed to be left off the *Road Warrior* ballot this year and seems to be campaigning for the 2008 elections with a vengeance. He has attended all but three *Grand Prix* thus far this season and has renewed his Level 4 membership—all without a Top 64 finish on the Pro Tour this season—on the back of a pair of Top 8s and a Top 16 at the *Grand Prix* level.

Andre has a mounting reputation as a Constructed player with his *Time Spiral* Block decks for Montreal and Florence as key line items on his resume—not to mention his Top 8 at *Worlds* in 2005. Andre seemed relieved that he could still work with the 40-card decks as many of his early finishes were in *Limited* formats (including a Top 16 in Kobe and a couple of GP Top 8s).

With *Lorwyn* PTQs looming, Andre answered my questions about the new *Limited* format and what you need to know to get yourself qualified for Kuala Lumpur.

**1. What advice do you have for players facing their first *Lorwyn* Sealed Deck when they start playing in the PTQs?**



*Coimbra has posted back-to-back GP Top 8s.*

**Andre:** Keep your mind open about the cards and card interactions, as you might miss some good ideas for your deck if you just use pre-tournament ideas.

## 2. When you are laying out a Sealed Deck do you arrange your cards tribally or by color?

**Andre:** By color because tribes are sub-themes of the colors.

## 3. It seems that there is plenty of mana fixing available in this format. Does that allow you to play all your good cards or does it make more sense to have a tight mana base and stick to two or three colors?

**Andre:** That's probably the hardest challenge people face with Sealed Deck but I usually prefer consistency over power whenever possible. Usually I just play two colors or two colors and one splash.

## 4. What is the best common in draft? In Quentin's column this week most people seemed to gravitate toward **Silvergill Douser**, **Nameless Inversion**, or **Mulldrifter**. What about Uncommon? Rare?

**Andre:** **Oblivion Ring**. It's quite flexible and functions very closely to a **2** **Vindicate** and there isn't much enchantment removal that is good.  
Rare: **Austere Command**. Uncommon: **Shriekmaw**.

## 5. How have you approached drafting in this format? Do you look for color signals? Tribal signals? Or do you just look for the best cards?

**Andre:** When I draft at low-level drafts I just go for best cards, as signals are not very reliable. However, at high level drafts I usually can get an edge on color signals, as well as tribal signals, even if the second ones are just a sub theme of the first one.



## Standard Speculation with Ben Bleiweiss

Not long after this article gets posted players all over the world will be participating in Champs tournaments—the Standard tournament that will set the standard for the format going into World Championships, MSS challenges, and any events that might, you know...qualify you to win a \$30,000 vehicle at Worlds Con. Most of you know Ben Bleiweiss from his weekly [Building on a Budget column](#) here at [Magicthegathering.com](#) but he's also one of the most plugged-in guys when it comes to cards and decks thanks to his work at [StarCityGames.com](#). In honor of that, I picked his brain a little on what he expected to see this weekend at [States](#) / [Champs](#).

Tops on his hot-card list were **Oona's Prowler** and **Thoughtseize**, followed by **Ajani Goldmane**, **Cryptic Command**, and **Eyes of the Wisent**. But he also said don't count out **Garruk Wildspeaker** and **Jace Beleren** on the Planeswalker front, while **Gaddock Teeg**, **Wren's Run Packmaster**, and **Profane Command** also should be pretty visible.

But what does that mean in terms of deck archetypes?

"If I had to narrow it down to the three most played archetypes," Bleiweiss said, "it would probably be blue-black control (**Mystical Teachings**), blue-white-x **Momentary Blink** decks, and Green beatdown (Elves, green-red, or green-white, but all centered around small, efficient creatures with removal). I also expect strong showings at States from black-green **Tarmogoyf**/Discard, White Weenie, and Goblins."

He also noted seeing "people do sick things with **Hostility**," commenting specifically about a game former Virginia State Champion Wes Moss was involved in. Piloting red-green, he faced off against a **Martyr of Sands** deck.

"His opponent had quite a life advantage," recalled Bleiweiss, "but Wes cast **Hostility**, swung for six, untapped, and then cast **Disintegrate** for ten, allowing him to swing for 36! Those 3/1 haste guys don't go away at end of turn, so they would have stuck around if that 36 damage in one turn wasn't enough."

For more niche-oriented cards, he pointed out that **Masked Admirers** is a card-advantage, **Wrath of God**-defeating machine. He also mentioned how **Hoofprints of the Stag** and **Sower of Temptation** are able to crush certain archetypes, so expect to see them floating around.



One of the most interesting trends to follow is how cards from previous sets get a second life when a new block rotates into Standard. Ben said that both **Ohran Viper** (because of so many green-centric decks) and **Haakon, Stromgald Scourge** (because of his interaction with **Nameless Inversion** and other changeling spells/creatures) have been catching a lot of people's eyes.

## Not Your Normal Northeast Challenge

I have an updated picture of the car that will be given away at [Worlds](#)

[Con](#). Don't worry, the **Magic** panels come off with no damage to the car if you have reservations about driving a four-wheeled advertisement around town. Personally I think it looks pretty cool and am hopeful that the finals will be played out on camera on the hood of the car.



Would you like to win this car? (Shown with removable Magic-themed wrap.) Photo courtesy Toyota of Manhattan.

The list of 100 stores participating in the Northeast Challenge events that will qualify players for the Friday tournament should go live soon. Each store will be hosting a tournament on November 18 which will put two players into a Friday tournament at Worlds Con, and that tournament will then feed 8 players into the 32-person Sunday event which will culminate with someone driving away in a **Magic**-mobile.

There are only so many weekends on the **Magic** calendar and it is impossible to avoid conflicts. We saw that this past weekend as players were forced to choose between Brisbane and Essen, but for the Northeast Challenge the choices were being forced on a broader segment of the **Magic** population. Grand Prix–Daytona takes place on the very same weekend and presents a difficult decision for Northeast-area players.

To mitigate that situation, a 101st event has been added to the schedule for the Sunday of the Grand Prix in Daytona. If you end up in Daytona and make Day Two, don't forget that the remaining 24 invites for the Car Tournament will be up for grabs at [public side events](#) on Thursday through Saturday at Worlds Con.

#### WORLDS CON SPOTLIGHT:

##### 2HG Zune Tournament

The first chance you get to qualify for the "[Win a Car](#)" tournament at Worlds Con is Thursday at 11 a.m. The format is Two-Headed Giant *Lorwyn* Sealed Deck. You and your partner get one *Lorwyn* tournament pack and four *Lorwyn* boosters, and the winning team members each get a 30gb Zune and a spot in the "Win a Car" tournament! For a complete list of Worlds Con public events, click [here](#).

## Hooray for Hollywood: Another Five Questions with Scott Larabee

Scott Larabee is a frequent guest of this column and regular contributor of five answers. Perhaps the reason Scott has been doling out the info on the 2008 Pro Tour schedule is to get additional face time in the column. What we do know now is the location of Pro Tour No. 2, the format, and the information on how to qualify.

### 1. So the next stop on the Pro Tour after Kula Lumpur is May 23-25, 2008 in Hollywood. Why that particular city, and will it actually be in Hollywood proper?

**Scott:** Who doesn't want to go to Hollywood? People have been trying to get there for 100 years! It is in Hollywood proper; right on the border with Beverly Hills [at the Hyatt Century Plaza Hotel](#).

### 2. Apparently there is something pretty cool about the tournament site...what is that?

**Scott:** We are trying to do something pretty special for this PT. More news on this later...

### 3. What format will the tournament be?

**Scott:** Standard!

### 4. What about the PTQ format and when will it start?

**Scott:** The PTQ format will be Extended. It will start January 5, 2008.

### 5. When will we know more about the remainder of the schedule?

**Scott:** Hopefully very soon. We are finalizing the rest of the schedule and should have the remainder announced in the next few weeks!

## One More Thing Before Your Go

City Champs is almost ready to kick off its second season. Things have changed somewhat since the Beta season. Players will vie for points at their local store in a series of eight tournaments over four months, alternating between a Limited and Standard format each month (the Limited events can be Sealed or Booster Draft). Players will earn points based on their finishes toward their Store Ranking. The Top 8 players will face off in a store final tournament with the winner of each store final advancing to the City Championships of their respective city.

This is a radical departure from the previous format which encouraged players to travel from store to store but was confusing and punishing to players who could not afford to travel. This new format means that the only time a player will have to potentially travel for this tournament series is for the actual City Championships, should they qualify.

Look for more updates and a complete fact sheet next week.

## Firestarter: Secret Tech for States

I really like [Lignify](#) as a piece of sleeper tech for this weekend. It shuts down lords from powering up their armies and is a two-for-one against legendary creature like [Gaddock Teeg](#), [Doran](#), [the Siege Tower](#), Haakon, Teferi, and others that I am surely missing. Not only does it blank the text boxes of those powerful legends, but it does so without stopping them from being a legendary permanent of that name.

What is your sleeper card for Standard this weekend? Head to the forums and share your thoughts, decks, and predictions for the new Standard format.

*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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