

Hi all, I just qualified for my first ever Magic: The Gathering Pro Tour at Spotlight Series: TMNT! How exciting!

My name is Simon Byrne and I have been playing sanctioned Magic since New Phyrexia, with making the Pro Tour a dream of mine since I was 10. My father taught me how to play and I fell in love with the following standard.

My previous Magic accomplishments vary across time as it has been an on and off game for me with school and other interests at certain points.

- Day two of a limited Grand Prix in 2013 when I was 12.
- Day two of a standard Grand Prix in 2016 when I was 15.
- Top 4 of a Modern 5k in 2022 when I was 21.

Not exactly a crazy resume but one I am proud of, nonetheless.

My favorite kinds of decks are interactive decks that can also attack with efficient creatures, which will be involved in my deck choice for the weekend in Richmond.

I have recently been playing less magic and reading more, but since I live in DC, Richmond was a no-brainer magic event to go to. I had not played much standard, but believed lessons to be the most powerful deck. The issue with this, for me, is that I think it would have taken longer than the amount of time I had to prepare for the event to learn to play it effectively. So, I asked for help.

I told my dear friend Liz Lynn (devoutedddruid on Bluesky) that I was considering 3 decks in my wheelhouse because I just wanted to have fun and play the kind of magic I am comfortable with:

- Boros Dragons
- Azorius Tempo
- Izzet Spellementals

Liz said that tempo and dragons are fine but nothing more, but the Spellementals deck was the most powerful and I should commit to that. Smart.

I wanted to plan for the matchups and faced the fact that lessons was not a good matchup, cub was great, prowess was also very good, and landfall was close. Good enough for me. Here is my decklist, where I was heavily influenced by what the boulder played at PT: Lowrwyn Eclipsed and some maneuvering of slots here and there by Liz:

<https://old.starcitygames.com/decks/160653>

So off I went to Richmond with Liz and Josh Williams (juubs) where I was more excited to hang out than had any sort of competitive expectation. My car did very well with Liz top 8ing the riftbound 5k on Friday, juubs REcqing on Saturday with stock Boros energy and well me.

Friday I played exactly one match in a ReCQ and got thrashed by roaming throne elementals. I decided to not play any more standard Friday.

Saturday the main event starts and I immediately lose to landfall round 1 by playing very poorly. At this point I'm 0-2 with the deck on the weekend and was not feeling confident. But then something cool happened.

I rattled off 5 wins in a row beating a reanimator deck, a mirror, two Rakdos monument decks, and a sacrifice deck.

5-1 and feeling good now. Sunderflock is quite powerful.

I lost to a lessons player next to go to 5-2.

I then finished the day by beating Boros dragons and a local friend, Trevor Sharp on lessons.

7-2.

This has matched my best day 1 at an event like this since I was 12. I was just happy to be there.

Day 2 is tired as everyone got less sleep due to the time change. I play against lessons in round 10 and win. I then beat mono-red in a really tight 3 game set against Quinn Tonole. Then I beat Kellen Pastore on Prowess.

I believe both of my opponents those last two rounds are well known names and feel good about winning. It starts to feel a little real. Two more wins and I think I can get there. 10-2 at this point.

My next two matches came against a local community member to me, Cody Colston, who does wonderful things for the DMV legacy league and keeps that format going in the area. He is on landfall and we have a great 3 game match where I felt lucky to have it all. My 14th round came against Michael Paluta, who also made top 8 ,where I win in two against another landfall deck.

Oh my god. I avenged my round 1 matchup loss to get the win and ins. Since paluta had a 11-1-1 record before we played I knew I would not get paired down to play him since we had played in Swiss. I am able to draw in round 15 with Jesse Piland (also on landfall) and seal my top into the top 8.

I lose in 3 to a Paluta rematch in the quarterfinals and got to see another DMV player, Jacob Durish make the finals.

The event felt like a flash where I drew very well and played well in spots as well as made several noticeable mistakes. Magic is weird in that way.

If you would like Spellementals help I highly recommend what the Boulder team wrote as they are much better at explaining the concepts and patterns than I will be in writing.

This just feels so surreal and I am beyond excited to participate and play at a pro tour in Amsterdam. I am even more lucky to have the support around me.

Special shout outs to:

- Liz Lynn for everything including deck choice
- Juubs for always wanting to hang out and play Magic or eat Taco Bell
- Noah Anderson Weiskircher for helping me with Titan (one time folks I won't do it again) and being a good friend and a competitive inspiration
- Nathan Goldberg for being along with my journey and also helping with Titan.
- The entire NoVa spikes server for being community when I moved to the DMV in 2023.

And my Dad. Thank you for teaching me this wonderful game that brought me to people I love and giving me a competitive outlet that can also help me travel.

Thank you for reading, sorry if this is a little sloppy, I am just happy.