

# Grand Prix-Manila Rocks the Philippines

*Sideboard Staff*

The atmosphere crackled with excitement on December 4 and 5 at the **Magic: The Gathering** Grand Prix tournament in Manila, Philippines. Hosted by Wizards of the Coast Inc. and Novelty Entertainment Inc., the event sparked the interest of more than 500 **Magic** players, including some who traveled from as far away as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore.

Amid a flurry of peripheral activities that included autographs by artist Ron Spears, the main tournament began with a Sealed-Deck format on the first day followed by a Booster Draft format on the second. At the beginning of the tournament, each player received one *Mercadian Masques* tournament pack and two boosters from which to create a deck for the competition.

Competitors played their best in the hopes of playing among the top 64. Those who were eliminated from the main tournament found their schedules suddenly filled with a separate Standard tournament, which awarded cash prizes equivalent to \$625 USD. Eliminated players also participated in trading sessions and other scheduled activities while waiting to see what names would make it into the finals.

The second day of competition whittled the 64 finishers down to only eight finalists. Using the Booster Draft format, all 64 players constructed their decks from booster packs passed around each table and then entered the final rounds with the new decks they had created. Late on Sunday, December 5, two top players emerged for the ultimate elimination round. Christopher Parreñas and Frederick Salazar, both from the Philippines, competed against one another for the first-place title. A crowd of spectators gathered to watch and cheered when Christopher Parreñas defeated Frederick Salazar.

Christopher Parreñas, an 18-year-old college student from Manila, Philippines, prefers a fast approach to the game, playing cards quickly and relying on his wits. He uses a "Suicide Black" deck in Standard tournaments; however, he enjoys the Sealed-Deck format more because it matches his fast techniques. He says he is "lucky at [Sealed Deck] and knows how it works." Whatever tournament style Parreñas is playing, he claims his secret to success involves concentration and focus. He placed in the top 16 in the 1998 Grand Prix-Manila tournament and has been playing the **Magic** trading card

game for a year and a half. He practices for competition at home with his friends and in local tournaments.

Second-place finisher, 19-year-old Frederick Salazar, lives in Las-Piñas, Philippines, and studies at the Mapúa Institute of Technology. His friends introduced him to the entertainment and challenge of the Magic game more than four years ago. According to Salazar, he prefers the Sealed-Deck tournament format because "it's fair to play and it's really fun." In Standard tournaments, he chooses a "Control" deck. He claims that his success in the 1999 Grand Prix-Manila tournament resulted from "practice . . . a lot of practice." In his spare time, Salazar also likes to bowl and play computer games.

Those competitors who placed in the top eight at Grand Prix-Manila received invitations to **Magic: The Gathering** Pro Tour-Los Angeles, scheduled for February 4-6, 2000, in Los Angeles, California, USA. Only the best **Magic** players in the world compete in this invitation-only event. The following Grand Prix-Manila players placed in the top eight and received invitations in addition to their prize money:

First-Christopher Parreñas, age 18, Philippines  
Second-Frederick Salazar, age 19, Philippines  
Third-Francis Robert Profeta, age 23, Philippines  
Fourth-Lawrence Lagman, age 27, Philippines  
Fifth-Au Yeung Hon Ming, age 34, Hong Kong  
Sixth-Andrew Buchanan, age 40, Hong Kong  
Seventh-Dino Eric Yu, age 28, Philippines  
Eighth-Ramon Allan Oca Jr., age 20, Philippines

Renowned **Magic** artist Ron Spears attended the event and spent two whole days signing cards and T-shirts for enthusiastic fans. Spears, the senior art director for the **Magic: The Gathering** game, created the artwork for several Japanese and Indonesian land cards. He also painted the "Crooked Scales" and "Deepwood Drummer" cards from the *Mercadian Masques* set, and numerous cards in the *Urza's Destiny* set. Grand Prix attendees flocked the autograph booth all weekend in order to meet Spears and get their cards signed. His presence at the event was just one of many activities that contributed to the overall excitement and fun enjoyed by those who participated.