

Finkel vs. Garfield

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Richard Garfield invented Magic. Jon Finkel defines the competitive aspect of the game, having raised the bar ever higher on excellence in play over the years. Now, thanks to a project conceived by Wizards of the Coast executives, the two meet in a showdown that will allow them to test their deck building and play skills against one another.

About a year ago, the two were challenged to build Ice Age-Alliances block constructed decks to play against each other. They were given a set of strict rules to follow when building the decks. For example, each could only use four rare cards in the deck, and no more than two copies of any one card. A number of cards was also "banned," such as Kjeldoran Outpost. Finkel built his deck with the help of friends such as brothers Steve and Dan O'Mahoney Schwartz, while Garfield enlisted the assistance of the Wizards of the Coast Research and Development department. He is still an active part of that group, thinking up some of the Magic cards for the new sets, so they were glad to pitch in.

The end result were two decks - red-green from Garfield, and red-black from Finkel. The decks were published in a gift "Deckmaster" box, released several months ago and available at fine gaming stores everywhere for around \$25-30. Now that fans have had the chance to try these decks out against each other (the decks actually seem pretty evenly matched), the two finally meet on a Pro Tour Sunday to find out once and for all whose deck is superior.

Finkel boasted that he would annihilate his opponent. However, he was also the only one who could have lost anything here. If Finkel won, fans would take that as a given, as he is the definite favorite in the matchup. However, if Garfield wins, Finkel would spend a long time trying to live this down.

Game 1



Jon Finkel submitted this card when he won the Magic Invitational and appears in the art.

The two players got into a creature standoff right from the start. Finkel's regenerating Skeleton High Guard held off a Bear. Garfield summoned Trap Door Spider and Phyrexian Warbeast to try and break through. Finkel tapped out to Lava Burst the Warbeast, hoping to two-for-one his opponent and destroy his land too, but Garfield had Bounty of the Hunt to save his creature.

Finkel summoned another High Guard, while Garfield tapped out to cast Folk of the Pines. At this point however, Garfield made a mistake, attacking with his Warbeast. Although Finkel was tapped out, he had two first-striking High Guards to block with, sending both the Warbeast and a land into the grave. Although Finkel was far, far away from being able to mount any kind of attack, he was also in good shape and not about to take any more damage.



Have trouble spelling "Phelddagrif"? Just remember that it's an anagram of "Garfield, PhD": Two Ds, One F.

The two continued to build up their ground forces to the point where neither could possibly get through. Finkel eventually drew and cast an Abyssal Specter, a creature that could get through the blockage. Garfield was ready for him, casting Hurricane for seven to bring Finkel down to five life points and taking out the flyer.

Finkel was now down to five life points. He knew that Garfield has a number of direct damage spells in his deck and he would lose in the long run, so he tried several half-hearted attacks, but never got Garfield to walk into his traps. Garfield played a very defensive game opting to keep creature parity rather than try to take out any of his opponent's creatures.

One such attack allowed Garfield's Yavimaya Ants to attack and take out one of Finkel's creatures.

Finkel got several more creatures in play, and was finally getting some damage in. Once again, he managed to outplay Garfield, by making a complicated play that allowed him to clear his opponent's side of the table with some help from Pyroclasm and Contagion. Garfield was so very close, having gotten Finkel down to three life points, but it was not close enough. The Death Spark he was holding in his hand was not enough to make a comeback, and a pair of Phantasmal Fiends did Richard in.

Garfield, who got hurt by misplaying the timing rules at least twice in this game, joked "Shouldn't we be playing by the rules as I made them?"

Game 2

In the second game, Garfield failed to play a third land. "This is the first time I am sitting up here and am honestly unhappy that my opponent is manascrewed," Finkel confessed. Garfield could only sit and watch as a turn four Balduvian Horde ravaged his life total. By the time Garfield found his third land, it was way too late. Finkel cast an Icy Manipulator and used it to tap the creature Garfield just summoned, and attacked for the win.