



## Making Magic

# Timmy, Johnny, and Spike

## Our three favorite players



Mark Rosewater

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## What Does That Mean?

First of all, be aware that if you are listed as having two or three types (such as Johnny / Spike), your most prominent type is listed first.

Now that you've taken the test, I'm sure you're asking questions like what the heck is a Timmy, Johnny, or Spike? Here in **Magic** R&D our job is create a game that makes players happy. In order to do this, we have to find out what players like about our game. Doing so has been a long ongoing process involving numerous factors. We've done questionnaires. We've done focus groups. We've lurked on **Magic** web sites and bulletin boards. We've talked to players in person. Heck, we even see what articles you read on this site.

After numerous years, we've come to the conclusion that there are three basic types of **Magic** players. The fancy term for these categories is "psychographic profiles." A psychographic profile separates players into categories based on their psychological make-up. What motivates that player to play? What kind of cards do they like? What kind of things encourages that player to keep on playing?

Because R&D loves naming things, we have given each of these three category types a name: Timmy, Johnny, and Spike. In this column I am going to explain each type and talk about how we came up with the goofy nickname.

One last thing before I start. Very few players fall into one specific psychographic profile. Most players have elements that overlap numerous profiles. This is why, for example, some of you who took the test got a combination of profiles rather than just one. I will talk about the hybrids after I explain each profile.

## Timmy

Timmy wasn't the first profile we created, but it was the first profile we named. Timmy's naming happened by accident during *Tempest* design. We were talking about whether or not **Verdant Force** would be popular. I happen to have a flair for the dramatic (if you haven't caught on yet), so I started one of my little speeches: (Incidentally, I'm not 100% sure why I chose the name "Timmy." I wanted to personify the kid so I gave him a name and Timmy had this innocent little-kid quality to it that must have struck my fancy in the heat of the moment.)

"Imagine a kid goes into a game store. Let's just call him... 'Timmy.' Now, Timmy doesn't have a lot of money. So, he buys one pack of Bogavhati (*Tempest's* codename). He rips it open and starts tearing through the cards to find the rare. And then he sees it. It's a big green creature. Seven power. Seven toughness. It's huge. Huge! He's eyes keep moving. He glances up at the casting cost: 5 , blah, blah, blah. Boring. Move on. Timmy looks at the rules text. There's a bunch of words. Timmy reads. Every turn Timmy gets



another creature. Another entire creature. It's small, but in ten turns, he'll have twenty creatures. A 7/7 creature with twenty 1/1s. How does his opponent stop that? It can't be stopped! Timmy finally exhales. He has found the Holy Grail."

For some reason, the name Timmy stuck.

Timmy is what we in R&D call the "power gamer." Timmy likes to win big. He doesn't want to eke out a last minute victory. Timmy wants to smash his opponents. He likes his cards to be impressive, and he enjoys playing big creatures and big spells.

One of the misconceptions is that Timmy has to be young. While its true that younger players are more apt to fall into this category, players of any age can be a Timmy. What sets Timmy apart from the other two profiles is that Timmy is motivated by fun. He plays **Magic** because it's enjoyable. Timmy is very social. An important part of the game is sitting around with his friends.

Timmy cares more about the quality of his win than the quantity of his wins. For example, Timmy sits down and plays ten games. He only wins three games out of ten but the three he wins, he dominates his opponent. Timmy had fun. Timmy walks away happy.

Each set, R&D makes sure to design a certain number of cards for Timmy. Timmy cards, as we call them, tend to be big creatures or spells with big effects. In general, Timmy cards are exciting but not too economical. The more efficiently costed ones will catch Spike's eye. Good examples of Timmy cards are: **Krosan Beast**, **Iridescent Angel**, and just about any dragon.

## Johnny

Johnny was the second profile to get a name. During *Urza's Saga* development, R&D had accepted the Timmy and "tournament player" profiles, but I believed that there was an important profile missing. You see, I wasn't really a Timmy player and I wasn't really a tournament player. I was this missing third type. While trying to explain who he was, I stumbled into calling him "Johnny." Like Timmy, the name stuck.



Johnny is the creative gamer to whom **Magic** is a form of self-expression. Johnny likes to win, but he wants to win with style. It's very important to Johnny that he win on his own terms. As such, it's important to Johnny that he's using his own deck. Playing **Magic** is an opportunity for Johnny to show off his creativity.

Johnny likes a challenge. Johnny enjoys winning with cards that no one else wants to use. He likes making decks that win in innovative ways. What sets Johnny apart from the other profiles is that Johnny enjoys deckbuilding as much as (or more than) he enjoys playing. Johnny loves the cool interactions of the cards. He loves combo decks. Johnny is happiest when he's exploring uncharted territory.

Like Timmy, Johnny cares more about the quality of his wins than the quantity. For example, let's say Johnny builds a new deck that has a neat but difficult way to win. He plays ten games and manages to get his deck to do its thing... once. Johnny walks away happy.

Each set, R&D designs some cards for Johnny. Johnny cards are cards that have unique effects that Johnny can build cool decks around. In general, Johnny cards are the kind of cards with real potential. (Some of them will eventually excite Spike.) Good examples of Johnny cards are **Holistic Wisdom**, **Radiate**, and **Battle of Wits**.

## Spike

Although Spike was the first profile R&D was aware of, it was the last to get a name. In fact, "Spike" is the only nickname I didn't come up with. None of R&D did. You see for years, R&D just called them Timmy, Johnny, and "the tournament player." But at some point we explained the three profiles to the **Magic** brand team. They felt the tournament player needed a name, so they named him. Why "Spike?" The best I've been able to figure out is they felt Spike sounded like a serious, play-to-win-type name.

Spike is the competitive player. Spike plays to win. Spike enjoys winning. To accomplish this, Spike will play whatever the best deck is. Spike will copy decks off the Internet. Spike will borrow other players' decks. To Spike, the thrill of **Magic** is the adrenalin rush of competition. Spike enjoys the stimulation of outplaying the opponent and the glory of victory.

Spike cares more about the quantity of wins than the quality. For example, Spike plays ten games and wins nine of them. If Spike feels he should have won the tenth, he walks away unhappy.



R&D makes plenty of cards for Spike. Unlike the Timmy and Johnny cards, Spike cards are relatively easy to make. Spike plays what wins, so if R&D makes a card good enough, Spike will play it. Good examples of Spike cards are **Call of the Herd**, **Shadowmage Infiltrator**, and **Fact or Fiction**.

## The Hybrids

Many players do not fit so easily in one box. These players have bits and pieces of multiple profiles.

## Timmy/Johnny or Johnny/Timmy

The Timmy/Johnny player likes the cool big effects but also enjoys the creative side of the game. A perfect example of a Timmy/Johnny card is **Haunting Echoes**. The card has a huge effect that attracts Timmy but offers cool deck potentials for Johnny. The Timmy/Johnny wants to smash his opponent, but with style.

## Timmy/Spike or Spike/Timmy

The Timmy/Spike player wants to win, but also like to indulge his fun side. When picking a deck, Timmy/Spike will always pick the good deck with the biggest creatures or effects. A good example of a Timmy/Spike card is **Rith, the Awakener**. Rith is a big dragon, but one that's costed aggressively with a good special ability.

## Johnny/Spike or Spike/Johnny

The Johnny/Spike player wants to win but only on his own terms. Most of the rogue tournament deckbuilders are Johnny/Spikes. They go to great lengths to be able to win with original decks. Even when they have to use a pre-made deck, they will always tweak it to give the deck their own spin. A good example of a Johnny/Spike card is **Basking Rootwalla**. The card is cool and offers interesting deckbuilding opportunities but still has the raw power needed to win.

## Timmy/Johnny/Spike (All Three)

The Timmy/Johnny/Spike players want it all. They want to play big cards, have innovative decks, and yet still win as much as possible. This hybrid is a rare breed as few players are pulled in all three directions. As such, R&D does not design too many cards that hit all three profiles at once. One example of a card that appealed to all three groups was **Verdant Force**. Timmy liked its huge size, Johnny appreciated its combo possibilities, and Spike liked its utility in reanimation and **Natural Order**-based decks.

There you have it. These are the profiles R&D considers when designing (and developing) cards. Be aware that these profiles apply to the motivations of the players and not the formats they play. Timmy can play in tournaments and Spike can play multi-player games. In a future article I will talk more about how R&D designs cards specifically for competitive and casual play.

Anyway, that's all for this column. Hopefully, it will give you all a little insight into one of the many facets R&D considers when we design (and develop) each set.

Join me next week when I explore the *italic*.


Until then, may you always flip heads.

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