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The Readers Respond

Ben Bleiweiss
Uncommon Knowledge
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I haven't done bone fide reader mailbag column yet, and it seems like the time to do so is now, between APC Week and the weeks leading up to the *Onslaught* previews. All questions and comments from readers are real. Away we go!

THE DRAFT BOX

Dozens of people wrote in about the [Big Draft Box](#). Some players are trying to make their own, others have variants already, and still more had questions about the box itself. The two most frequently asked questions were "How do you make packs?" and "How do you keep cards from being stolen?"

To make packs, each player randomly (without looking) pulls forty-five cards from the box. We try not to pull clumps of cards, since fully drafted decks tend to be returned to the box in order. Imagine pulling thirty cards in a row only to find you've gotten fifteen white and green cards from a former white/green deck! After pulling the 45 cards, we make three packs apiece of fifteen cards each, and then proceed in normal booster draft fashion.

As far as security, I've yet to have a card stolen from the box. I only let people I know personally play from the box, or friends of people I know personally, who are vouched for. Although I'd love to let complete strangers play from the box, it's just not feasible due to the threat of theft.



MORE PERSONAL INFORMATION

Many people have asked about my favorites. In no particular order:

Favorite Token Creature: Saprolings, because there's just something about fungus.



Favorite Card Artwork: *Dandan*, because there's just something about Drew Tucker drawing a picture of a big fish lurking menacingly below the surface of the water.

Favorite Set: For limited play, it'd be *Urza's Saga*, because cycling was a great mechanic for getting you through your deck. You could draw more cards during a game in this block than any other. For constructed play, it's *Invasion*. There are just so many good cards, ideas, and symmetry behind this set that you can't help but enjoy playing with it.

Favorite Magic Writers: I'm going to preface answering this one by saying that this list is limited to three writers who currently have my fancy. I keep up with almost every **Magic** website each day, so the list of the authors who I read weekly number in the

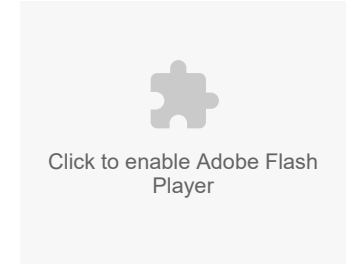
dozens.

Favorite Current Tournament Writer: Our own [Brian David-Marshall](#) has avoided writing for the **Magic** community at large since he sold *Neutral Ground*—until recently. Aside from a look back at a couple of old decks, he'd been concentrating on his career as a comic book writer. Recently though, he began a new [series of articles](#) about his quest to become a constructed player on the [Sideboard](#). These are hands down the best articles I've read in the past couple of months, and I wholly recommend everyone pop on over and take a look at them.

Favorite Current Issue Writer: [StarCity's](#) The Ferrett. I've never been disappointed by his offerings, ranging from the history of **Magic** sales at major bookstore chains, to the importance of your wife over playing in a tournament.



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA



Update on Rain Delay



MESSAGE BOARDS



RULES



Favorite Casual Writer: It's a toss up between two certain weekly columnists at this site, but who I give the nod to depends on whether I win Jay's upcoming writer's challenge. Here's a hint: they aren't Mark or Randy, and I'm not vain enough to include myself.

P.E.S.T.

P.E.S.T. ("Please Exterminate Squirrel Tokens!") is alive and well. I save virtually every email I receive from readers, so all of the P.E.S.T. (and the handful of anti-P.E.S.T.) missives are safely tucked away on my hard drive. People sent me a lot of interesting reasons about their dislike for squirrels, and they fell under the following categories:

1. They look so harmless, but then your opponent plays **Overrun** or **Coat of Arms** and suddenly they are a sea of bloodthirsty rapscallions.
2. Individual squirrels are as large as certain **goblins**, **merfolk**, and **dwarves**. There's no way one fuzzy rodent should be able to bite a dwarf to death.
3. **Earthcraft** plus **Squirrel Nest** makes for a very short and frustrating game. Infinite squirrels shouldn't be doable as a two-card combo.
4. Squirrels actually stole **Magic** cards from your house, and used them to line their tree nests.
5. Your opponents make so many squirrel tokens that you can't see any of the other cards on the table since your play area is now covered with squirrel token proxies.
6. Saprolings are supposed to be green's 1/1 token creature, and these rats with tails just aren't the same as sentient fungi.
7. In a world with dragons, knights, and legends doing battle, squirrels just seem a wee bit out of place.
8. The squirrel mafia at Northwestern University (lead by a big black rodent appropriately named Lucifer) and the super-human speedster Bob at Wittenberg University are in cahoots and looking to dominate all places of higher learning in the world.
9. Squirrels kick your butt over and over again.
10. Squirrels ate your... ahem.



BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?

I sold my collection of cards (except for the Draft Box and a Pro Tour One Collector's Set) at Pro Tour - New Orleans this past year. I get my playing fix via **Magic** Online. Because of this, I have no extra cards to trade/give/sell/barter/eat/bathe with at all, so unfortunately there's not much use in asking me to send you cards. My rares went to Gaming Jim, and my commons and uncommons went to charity. I dug a big hole in the ground next to my house for my foil cards, and planted them. I'm hoping that some day soon they'll sprout a foil tree with foil cards of all shapes and sizes. However, if you happen to uproot this sapling before it fully develops, you're more than welcome to keep the cards beneath.

ASSORTED COLUMNS

I've attempted to mix things up over the course of the past half-year (has it been that long?). This is week thirty-four, and in recognition of that fact I'm retroactively deleting any memory of my green creature column. It never happened folks, so don't even bother looking at the archives.

On the other hand, I've had great responses to my columns the past few weeks. It hurt that my email went offline for about two months (limiting my contact with readers to the message boards), but I really appreciate the time everyone takes to write to me, whether it's about my column, **Magic** in general, or life.

With that said, I'm going to be holding a contest. I've got a list of dozens of future column ideas that I keep in my computer drawer, but I want to see what you, the reader, can come up with! However, as with any contest, there are rules:

- One entry per person, with one idea per person.
- Clearly identify your email to me as being part of the "MAKE YOUR OWN COLUMN" contest.
- The column idea must be about a certain theme in **Magic** that you want to read about/know the history of. It could be as general as "The history of goblins", or as specific as "Blue creatures with five activated abilities which are really hard to kill with **Swords to Plowshares** and **Terror**."
- Send all entries to me personally, at bleiweiss1@cox.net Any ideas posted on the message board that are not also emailed to me will be ignored.

The winning column will be written by yours truly, and will appear sometime right after the *Onslaught* previews. I don't know what the prize will be yet, but I assure you it will be something really cool and **Magic** related.

Next week: *Invasion* block is about to become **Magic** history. That means that it's mine now.

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*Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about*

Magic, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.



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