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Mons Made Me Do It



Mark Rosewater

A Goblin-esqe look at Goblins

Welcome to Goblin Week! This week we'll be exploring one of the oldest and most beloved of the creature types. In fact, when I first sat down to write this column, I wasn't sure how I could cover such a diverse topic. But then it hit me: I should create something as chaotic and fun as the Goblins themselves. If you don't like abstract, offbeat columns, you might want to skip "Making Magic" today. If you're still here, hold onto your hat and enjoy the ride.

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Ten Things You Might Not Know About Goblins

1. Goblins believe they invented the rock, the best weapon ever.
2. Goblins live in small groups ranging from 10-15 individuals.
3. Goblins will eat pretty much anything they don't think will kill them.
4. Goblins' favorite social pursuits are sex, gambling, and tinkering with new weapons and armor.
5. Goblins believe bigger is better. (What's better than a fifty pound club? A hundred pound club.)
6. Goblins conquer and raid because they need the space.
7. Goblins find large noses, feet and hands particularly attractive in their mates.
8. Goblins are named after the sound their mother makes during delivery.
9. Goblin parents regularly disown their children, trade children, gamble children (and spouses), and otherwise switch family units.
10. The Goblins' biggest asset is their ability to quickly reproduce. (You can afford to experiment with trial and error if you get a lot of tries.)



How Squee Got His Name

During *Visions* development, I was on the naming and flavor text team. At the beginning of one meeting, I mentioned that I didn't like the current text on **Relentless Assault**. It was a poem labeled "Goblin nursery rhyme/war cry". I liked the tag line but didn't like the actual poem. So the lead of the team, Pete Venters (yes, the artist, who used to run the continuity department – now called Creative Text) told me that I could improve it but I only had until the end of the meeting.

So, while the meeting was going on, I was frantically trying to come up with a poem. I started with the idea that the war cry would encourage the Goblins to run away. Once I had the word flee, I rhymed it with tree. I figured that some Goblins could climb a tree and see the enemy's army. So when I was naming the two Goblins in the poem (I wanted two because it felt more "nursery rhyme"), I knew I needed one-syllable names to fit the scansion of the poem. Also, it seemed cool to rhyme the second one with tree. I got "Flog" right away. It just sounded like a Goblin name. So then I was coming up with one syllable words that rhymed with tree. Somehow "Squee" felt right so I used it. Just in time for the meeting to end.

Months later when I was working on the *Weatherlight* Story (with then story manager Michael Ryan), we needed to name the Goblin who would function as comic relief. We both remembered the poem (Michael was also on the flavor text team) and liked the name Squee. And that, is how Squee got his name.

Actual Goblin Cards

Goblin cards often get silly names. All the following Goblin cards have actually seen print (okay, one of them only appeared on a computer if you want to get technical):

- **Goblin Artisans** (*Antiquities*)
- **Goblin Bookie** (*Unglued*)
- **Goblin Bowling Team** (*Unglued*)
- **Goblin Bully** (*Portal*)
- **Goblin Chirurgeon** (*Fallen Empires*)
- **Goblin Commando** (Starter 1999)
- **Goblin Flotilla** (*Fallen Empires*)
- **Goblin Gardener** (*Urza's Destiny*)
- **Goblin Lackey** (*Urza's Saga*)
- **Goblin Legionnaire** (*Apocalypse*)
- **Goblin Masons** (*Urza's Destiny*)
- **Goblin Medics** (*Urza's Legacy*)
- **Goblin Mutant** (*Ice Age*)
- **Goblin Polka Band** (Mircoprose's Astral Set)
- **Goblin Pyromancer** (*Onslaught*)
- **Goblin Ringleader** (*Apocalypse*)
- **Goblin Sharpshooter** (*Onslaught*)
- **Goblin Ski Patrol** (*Ice Age*)
- **Goblin Sledder** (*Onslaught*)
- **Goblin Snowman** (*Ice Age*)
- **Goblin Soothsayer** (*Mirage*)
- **Goblin Spelunkers** (*Urza's Saga*)
- **Goblin Spy** (*Invasion*)
- **Goblin Swine-Rider** (*Visions*)
- **Goblin Welder** (*Urza's Legacy*)

What the Hell is a Chirurgeon?

For years I thought this was a made-up word. But it's not. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary* chirurgeon (pronounced "ki – rur – jen" with a long i) it is a Middle English word from Old French from Latin that means surgeon.

The Goblins You Never Saw

Looking through our database, I stumbled across some Goblins that never saw print. Yet. Here they are:


- **Goblin Armorer**
- **Goblin Assault Leader**
- **Goblin Cheerleading Squad**
- **Goblin Cleric Mocker**
- **Goblin Duelist**
- **Goblin Fanatic**
- **Goblin Firestarter**
- **Goblin Gatling Gun**
- **Goblin Hit Squad**
- **Goblin Homeowners**
- **Goblin Megaboss**
- **Goblin Pumpster**
- **Goblin Sandstalker**
- **Goblin Vulture Riders**

Flavor Text for **Goblin Mountaineer** (*Portal*)

Goblin Mountaineer, barely keeps his family fed.

Goblin Card Design

Since this is a design column, here's how I designed several Goblin cards:

Goblin Bookie (Unglued) - For years, I've tried to put a card nicknamed "Reflip" into a magic set. The card was a red instant for  that let a person reflip a coin. Every development team that saw the card removed it from the set as R&D has made a conscious effort to keep coin flipping out of constructed. While working on *Unglued*, I realized I might as well use the ability there since I didn't think it would ever see play in a tournament legal set. I turned it into a reusable ability to strengthen it and then added dice rerolling as the random elements in *Unglued* included both coins and dice.

Goblin Gardener/Goblin Masons (Urza's Destiny) - During *Urza's Destiny* design, I played around with "leaves play" effects. In red, I had two destruction effects, one that destroyed land and the other that destroyed a wall. Who better to destroy things than Goblins? And in fine Goblin tradition, I named the cards as occupations that in any other race would build the thing being destroyed. But Goblins? Well, they're slightly better at destroying things than building them. Thus, the **Goblin Gardener** and **Goblin Masons**.

Mogg Fanatic (Tempest) - In design, *Tempest* had a cycle of cards I called the **martyrs**. Each one was a 1/1 creature for C (R&D speak for cost a single mana of the appropriate color; "C" stands for colored mana) with a sacrifice ability. The only two cards to make it through development were **Mogg Fanatic** and **Blood Pet**. Two of the cards, **Hapless Researcher** and **Benevolent Bodyguard** showed up years later in *Judgment*. The green martyr? Well, someday...

Squee, Goblin Nabob (Mercadian Masques) - During the time that the *Weatherlight* Saga was part of the storyline, we tried to put at least one *Weatherlight* crewmember in each set. During *Mercadian Masques* design, we decided that we would include Squee. Now, I knew that Squee was very popular. In fact, I believed Squee to be the most popular *Weatherlight* crewmember, so I knew we had to do something flavorful yet useful. I thought about what his role in the story was and it dawned on me that Squee's running joke was that he was the comic relief that just wouldn't die. So, I decided to reflect that in the card mechanic. No matter what you do, you just can't get rid of him. After the card came out, one of the novelist decided to grant Squee the actual ability of regeneration so that he would always come back to life.



Who the Hell is Mons?

Mons Johnson is a friend of Richard Garfield. And Mons loves Goblins. We're not talking about a small infatuation. We're talking about a Looney Tunes, obsessive, giggle-your-heart-out love for Goblins. For a while Mons worked in R&D. While he did he created numerous decks such as "Goblin Stasis," "Goblinpotence," and "Goblin-geddon." Mons lives for Goblins. So when Richard was working on Alpha, he felt it only appropriate to turn Mons into a Goblin general. Well, maybe not a general but some sort of Goblin leader. And thus Mons became part of **Magic** and Goblin history.

Mons Johnson Magic Bar Bet

If you ever in a bar (for those of you of drinking age) with some fellow **Magic** players and you want to turn a fast buck, here's a **Magic** bar bet. In Alpha, there was a 1/1 Goblin for a single red mana (hint, hint, I just talked about in the last section, and no I don't mean **Goblin Balloon Brigade**). Spell its name.

Just for fun, go ahead and spell it. The answer is below.

Keep going.

Keep going.

Not there yet.

No, keep going.

Yeah, I know I could've stopped but I'm having fun.

Psych!

Are you annoyed yet?

This is the kind of things Goblins do.

No, really.

Well, if Goblins had computers.

By this point, you've probably forgotten the question. Spell the vanilla 1/1 Goblin in Alpha. Answer below.

I'm not done playing with you yet.

No, not yet.

Now that you've invested this much time, I know I've got you. You can't give up yet.

In the commentary track of *Austin Powers*, Mike Myers talks about how long you should hold a joke.

It starts funny, he says.

And it gets funnier.

But then it stops being so funny.

But if you push through that, it gets funny again.

Is it funny again, yet?

How about now?

Now?

I'm expecting to get some email on this.

You know, you can give up any time. Just go.

Aha, but you couldn't, could you?

You're mine! All mine! Bwahh hah hah!

Okay, enough's enough. Time to reveal the bar bet. See below.

You fell for it again.

But this time, I'm actually going to finally reveal the answer.

Are you the kind of person that thought someday Charlie Brown was actually going to kick the football when Lucy held it?

Yeah, me too. I was voted "Most Optimistic" in my high school yearbook.

I knew I'd win.

I'm so optimistic, my blood type is "B(e) Positive."

These jokes (if you want to call them that) courtesy of my stand-up days.

Okay, this time, I'm actually going to reveal the answer to the bar bet.

At this point its going to be a little anti-climatic, but I have to end this column at some point. So...

Charlie Brown is never going to kick the ball!

But I will give you the answer. How do you spell the card? **Mons's Goblin Raiders**. The vast, vast majority of players will not put both s's on Mons's.

And that is my Goblin column for today.

I hope you all enjoyed it. Well, those of you that bothered to read this far.

Join me next week when I go behind the scenes of *Onslaught*.


Until then, may you keep scrolling in search of the next punch line.

Mark Rosewater

Send mail and death threats to Mark at makingmagic@wizards.com.



Mons Johnson, in the flesh.

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