



[ARTICLES HOME](#) > [ARCHIVES](#) > Latest Developments

OLD UNCLE FESTER

Posted in **Latest Developments** on December 13, 2002



By Randy Buehler

[Archive](#)

 SHARE ARTICLE ▼



[Festering Goblin](#) may not look like much, but he's actually a lot more than just a fun guy to sacrifice to [Nantuko Husk](#). [Festering Goblin](#) is the first Goblin in the history of **Magic** that doesn't cost red mana. You can't imagine how much we argued about that... but I can try to paint the picture anyway.

Once it became obvious that *Onslaught* was going to be the tribal block, some people in R&D made an impassioned plea for us to "bleed" creature types outside of their normal colors. This was back when the theme was just being designed and everyone knew that there was a limit to the number of races that we could make "matter." If each color had a race of small things and a race of big things and some colors had a race of fliers and then white had both attack-oriented guys and defense-oriented guys (etc.) then that was more races than we could possibly support.

One way to address this problem would be to have races spill over into more than one color. That way the Goblin player, for example, could choose to play not just with red cards, but also with, say, blue cards. If Goblins bled into blue then suddenly there

would be twice as many goblin cards and we wouldn't need as many different races (since blue ground weenies could be Goblins). In addition, this would give Goblin theme decks a whole new dimension for deckbuilders to explore. Instead of always being mono-red, this new generation of Goblin decks could be two colors (or maybe even more). Because *Onslaught* wanted to take tribal decks to the new level, it needed to do something new with them. Besides, wouldn't a blue Goblin be really cool?

The responses to these various arguments were many and loud. Sure, a blue Goblin would be new and weird and different and cool, but so would a green Counterspell and we all know that would be a bad idea. The colors are defined as much by what they can't do as they are by what they can. **Magic's** five-color structure requires us to give weaknesses to every color or else everyone would just play whichever color could do everything the best. According to this line of thought, we should leave Goblins in just red in order to keep red more special, and also in order to keep Goblins more special. If we did stuff (like blue Goblins) just because it hasn't been done before then we'd just be giving in to the dark side; after doing that for a while there wouldn't be any flavor or identity left for any of the colors, and the game would probably die.

So maybe not a blue Goblin, they countered, but we could still bleed races into colors where they make sense. Black Goblins, for example, seem perfectly reasonable from a flavor point of view. Tolkien's goblins seem very black and a lot of **Magic's** fantasy flavor is descended from our lord J.R.R.

Everyone agreed that it made sense to have races that were in more than one color, and that's part of how we narrowed things down to just eight tribes. Birds are in blue and white, Clerics are in black and white, Beasts are in red and green (and a smattering elsewhere), and Wizards are mostly blue with a few scattered around elsewhere.

Goblins are very much part of what defines red.

Some still felt that this wasn't enough – they thought every tribe (or at least most tribes) should have multiple colors to choose from, that way when you went to build your theme deck you had a lot more options. The problem with this reasoning, we countered, was that it felt too much like gold cards. Gold cards are great, and we all love them, but just because I like vanilla ice cream doesn't mean I want it for every meal of every day. Mechanics ebb and flow from block to block in **Magic** and the fact that things constantly change gives the game a lot of staying power. Besides, the rest of us didn't think we needed to turn tribal into a multicolor mechanic in order to give deckbuilders enough options to enjoy themselves.

You can tell from *Onslaught* which side won this debate. However, the losing side still had a pretty good point about how Goblins made sense in black from a flavor point of view. Several of us in R&D were really disappointed that we had missed our

opportunity to do a black-red Goblin Zombie in *Invasion*. At the time, the creative team argued that we had to do [Shivan Zombie](#) as a Barbarian Zombie because our cycle of 2/2's required us to use the same red type on both that card and [Yavimaya Barbarian](#). Since you couldn't have a Goblin Elf, they argued, that meant the red type had to be Barbarian (not Goblin). I'm still not sure why you couldn't have a Goblin Elf I mean, if the Elf was drunk who knows what might happen? It's high time for **Magic's** first inter-racial kiss! (Come to think of it, there is a Merfolk Elf...) Anyway, it's probably a good thing that I'm not in charge of creative decisions like that, but it was still disappointing that we couldn't have a Goblin Zombie and that's the main reason [Dralnu's Crusade](#) was designed and put into *Planeshift*.

Flash-forward to *Onslaught* and we figured it would indeed be cool to give Goblin players a couple of cards that could tempt them into playing black-red. [Festering Goblin](#) and [Cabal Slaver](#) were the result and I think they were a nice compromise for a fairly contentious issue.

The only blue Goblin we'll ever print is the one on the card [Browse](#).

Last week's poll:

What color is your favorite card?

White	953	10.1%
Blue	1454	15.5%
Black	2001	21.3%
Red	866	9.2%
Green	1883	20.0%
Gold/Split	1461	15.5%
Artifact	570	6.1%
Land	217	2.3%
Total	9405	100.0%

Wow, a reasonably even spread... that's pretty cool.

Randy may be reached at latestdevelopments@wizards.com.

Posted in **Latest Developments** on December 13, 2002

 **SHARE ARTICLE** ▼

FEATURED ARTICLES

DAILY MAGIC UPDATE

NOVEMBER 14, 2017

The November 14, 2017 Update

Blake Rasmussen

CARD IMAGE GALLERY

NOVEMBER 14, 2017

Unstable

Wizards of the Coast

CARD PREVIEW

NOVEMBER 13, 2017

Unstable Mechanics

Matt Tabak

EVENTS

GRAND PRIX PORTLAND

Show up or tune in for Grand Prix Portland, broadcast on [Twitch.tv/magic](https://www.twitch.tv/magic).

[➤ LEARN MORE](#)

PRODUCTS

Ixalan is yours to uncover!

[➤ EXPLORE IXALAN](#)

MTG ARENA



Closed beta is now in sight!

[➤ SIGN UP NOW!](#)

LATEST LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ARTICLES

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Changes

by, Sam Stoddard

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Things I've Learned

by, Sam Stoddard

ARTICLES

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ARCHIVE



WHERE TO PLAY AND BUY



Find a location to buy or play
Magic: The Gathering near you.

Enter your city or postal code

FIND NOW !



Select your language:

English

WIZARDS BRAND FAMILY

MAGIC | D&D | WPN | DUEL MASTERS | AVALON HILL

[Terms of Use](#) | [Code of Conduct](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Customer Service](#) | [Cookies](#)



© 1995-2017 Wizards of the Coast LLC, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.