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THE WIZARDS INVITATIONAL

Posted in [ARTICLES HOME](#) on February 14, 2003

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he votes are in and the public has spoken. Mostly I think what the public said was: "Who are these guys?" and then voted for the cards they liked best. In any case, the upcoming Wizards Invitational on *Magic Online* should be fun; there's a nice cross-section of WotC employees playing which includes most of the familiar names that have been associated with *Magic* through the years, including Richard Garfield. The winner gets to make a new *Magic Online* avatar, which will be available exclusively to people who log in to *Magic Online* on its first birthday: June 24.

The Wizards Invitational will take place on *Magic Online* on February 28, March 1, and March 2 and the best way to watch it is to log on to *Magic Online*. There will be live commentary of one match per round, you can watch the replays of all the games that get played, and you can hang out and chat with everyone else who is watching (and playing in) the event. On Sunday there will also be gunslinging, where randomly selected people will get to play against the Invitationalists.



The Participants

Here, alphabetically, are the 16 competitors who will be slugging it out in two weeks, along with the avatars they are playing for:

- Ramon Arjona ([Squee, Goblin Nabob](#))
- Tyler Bielman ([Demonic Tutor](#))
- Randy Buehler ([Necropotence](#))
- Charlie Catino ([Balance](#))
- Jeff Donais ([Sol'kanar the Swamp King](#))
- John Doyle ([Krosan Beast](#))
- Michael Elliott ([Tradewind Rider](#))
- Richard Garfield ([Vesuvan Doppelganger](#))
- Aaron Forsythe ([Land Tax](#))
- Del Laugel ([Visara the Dreadful](#))
- Bill McQuillan ([Nekrataal](#))
- Dan Myers ([Mirri, Cat Warrior](#))

- Bill Rose ([Two-Headed Giant of Foriys](#))
- Mark Rosewater ([Maro](#))
- Fred Royal ([Royal Assassin](#))
- Worth Wollpert ([Phyrexian Negator](#))

The Formats

The basic structure of the tournament will be familiar to anyone who has followed a *Magic* Invitational in the past: it's round robin – that is, everybody plays everybody else once. The 15 rounds will use 5 different formats, with the formats getting used for 3 rounds each. There will be six rounds on Friday, six rounds on Saturday, and then on Sunday there will be 3 rounds followed by the finals and gunslinging. Here are descriptions of the formats where we will test our “skills:”

Standard (with *Legions*): Here you get to see what happens when *Legions* cards get added into the mix of the Standard constructed format. Or what might actually happen is you get to see what happens when we take all the *Scourge*, “Bacon,” and *Eighth Edition* cards out of our Future Future League decks. I hear [Wild Mongrel](#) is still in print, but I'm not sure I believe that because I haven't actually played with one in what feels like years.

Two-Headed Giant sealed deck: Each two-man team gets ten *Legions* booster packs from which to construct their two decks. That's 150 creatures each and nary an instant, sorcery, artifact, enchantment, or nonbasic land to be found in the entire format.

Tribal Wars: We're going to introduce a new format to *Magic Online* and this one has a much better name than “Casual Format 3.” The rules for Tribal Wars are simple: at least one third of the cards in your deck must be creatures that share a creature type. There are no sideboards allowed and there is a Banned List that currently includes six cards ([Engineered Plague](#), [Endemic Plague](#), [Tsabo's Decree](#), [Peer Pressure](#), [Unnatural Selection](#), and [Circle of Solace](#)). Anything else is fair game.

Theme Decks: Whoever is in last place when it comes time for this format gets their choice from all the theme decks that are available in *Magic Online*. Then next to last gets to pick from all the rest, etc., until everyone has drafted a theme deck to take into battle for those three rounds.

***Legions* Release Sealed:** Just a couple of days after the Invitational, everyone else gets their first chance to play with *Legions* online. *Legions* packs go on sale in the online store at 12:01 AM Pacific time Wednesday morning (March 5th) and for the next two days there will be a steady stream of special *Legions* Release tournaments running in the Premier Events room. The format for those tournaments is sealed deck with one tournament pack of *Onslaught* plus three booster packs of *Legions* and that's exactly the format we're going to use during this segment of the Invitational.



Randy Sizes Up the Competition

If you want to learn more about the sixteen players who will be participating in the festivities you have a couple of options. You can click [here](#) to read the bio's that they wrote for themselves or you can read on in this article for my take on my competition.

Ramon Arjona – Ramon is one of the software developers that works on coding the game itself, so that will give him a bit of a home court advantage, but we're not going to let him use any of his special tools or cards. Some people think he got voted in because he came first alphabetically on the ballot, but I don't buy the “Alphabet Conspiracy Theory” because the next three guys on the ballot all missed the cut. I think Ramon's real weapon was a certain pesky goblin that just keeps coming back for more.

Tyler Bielman – I think Tyler's avatar choice was brilliant: [Demonic Tutor](#) probably garnered him overwhelming support from the Type 1 crowd. I'm not sure the Type 1 crowd will be of quite as much help come tourney time, however.

Randy Buehler – There are four people on this list with Pro Tour experience (me, Worth, Aaron, and Jeff) and I'm the only one who won the title "Pro Tour Champion." That might mean something if it was still 1997...

Charlie Catino – Charlie has been playing *Magic* since the very beginning. Way back before Alpha had even been released he was one of the original playtesters and when Richard gave everyone in that crowd some of the very first *Magic* cards ever printed, Charlie immediately grabbed his favorite card to build around: [Balance](#).

Jeff Donais – [Sol'Kanar the Swamp King](#) isn't so much Jeff's favorite card as it is the albatross that hangs around his neck. Way back at the 1997 World Championships Jeff had a seemingly insurmountable lead going into the last day of the Swiss when he decided to run a 3-color [Necro](#) deck that eschewed more popular creatures like [Hypnotic Specter](#) in favor of ... Sol'Kanar. To this day Jeff still sings the Swamp King's praises.

John Doyle – John is in charge of the group of tech guys who makes the program work. He didn't really get into *Magic* until *Magic Online* came along, but he's very dedicated. I was once in a meeting with him where he seemed to be fidgeting a bit as the meeting ran long. Then when the meeting had already run over by 15 minutes and the rest of us wanted to start a new topic, he apologized and explained that his wife had gone into labor right before the meeting and he really couldn't stay much longer.

Michael Elliott – There are four people who (between the four of them) have designed a vast majority of all the *Magic* cards that have ever been made: Richard Garfield I'll give you for free and Mark Rosewater is also a "gimme," but for 10 points each, who are the other two? Mike Elliott is one and the other is also on this list. Mike has essentially the same job title ("Senior Designer") and job responsibilities as Mark except that he doesn't have the "go talk to the public about *Magic*" gig.

Richard Garfield – He's undoubtedly the highlight of the Invitational. We probably could have had a really cool, successful, and fun event if we had just said "come watch Richard play *Magic*." Also, leave it to Richard to think outside the box even when asked for something as simple as a favorite card that can be turned into an avatar if he wins: he picked [Vesuvan Doppelganger](#) and further explained that when you sit down to play a match as the Doppelganger, you turn into your opponent's avatar.

Aaron Forsythe – Aaron is my pick to win the event. He's only been at WotC for a little over a year so his Pro Tour skills haven't rusted away yet. In addition, the man just loves to game and he'll be one of the few people who practices for the event.

Del Laugel – She chose not to own up to this fact when she wrote her bio, but it's relevant to the story now so I'm going to "out" her: Del is my wife. Choosing [Visara the Dreadful](#) as her avatar and being the only woman on the ballot was enough to get her voted in on her own merits, but I think the storyline of a husband versus wife showdown might be feature match material when it comes up.

Bill McQuillan – Quill wrote the best bio of any of us and I couldn't hope to write anything as interesting.

Dan Myers – Dan runs the best website that you might not know exists. The [Magic Online web page](#) has a lot of good information about the game and there is a constant supply of good articles about *Magic Online* ranging from technical details to draft advice to announcements about updates and new releases. The Academy is a particularly good source of information for players who are new to the game and want to learn how things work, and new articles are constantly added to it.

Bill Rose – Bill is the highest ranking guy at Wizards who is participating in this event. He's the Vice President of R&D, which means four Invitationalists report to him and three others report to them. He's also one of the four designers who have made the most *Magic* cards over the years. Finally, he may have broken the system by choosing [Two-Headed Giant](#) as his avatar. Bill claims that he gets another head, and that gives him the right to bring in anyone he wants to help him play his games during the tournament.

Mark Rosewater – I could take this opportunity to make fun of Mark's playing ability, but he's already planning to make fun of himself in a future column and, more to the point, Mark won't need any help being made fun of during the event itself.

Fred Royal – The Brand and Marketing team has sent Fred out as their sole champion. He has been coordinating work as the senior producer for *Magic Online* for years now and is a regular in the multiplayer room.

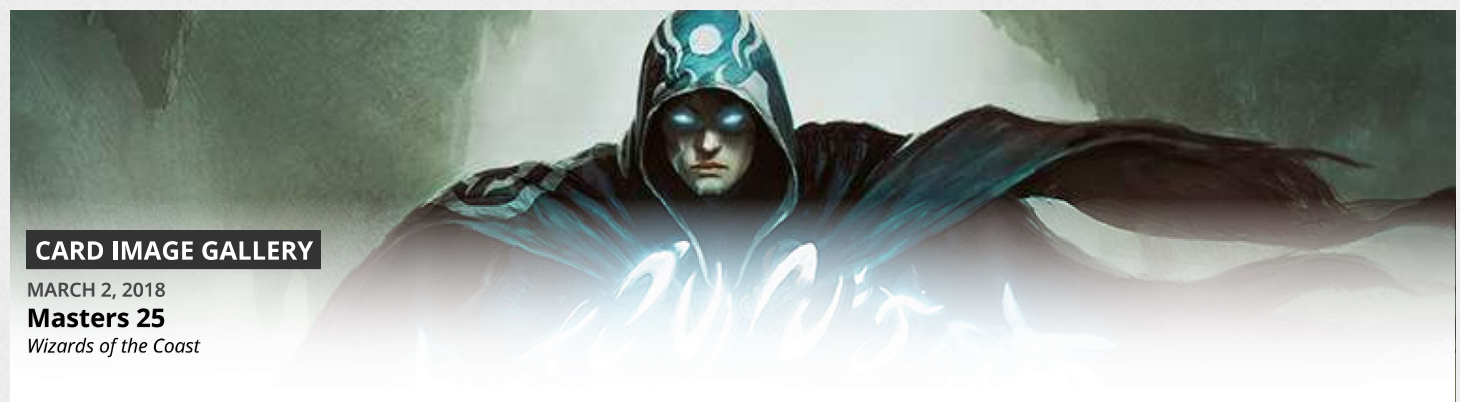
Worth Wollpert – Worth has been the highest rated guy in the FFL (our internal Magic league) for quite a while, but his responsibilities as the guy in charge of **MLB Showdown** have prevented him from playing as much *Magic* recently as he might otherwise like to. Personally, I think he's just been ducking us and sitting on his rating. We shall find out in two weeks...

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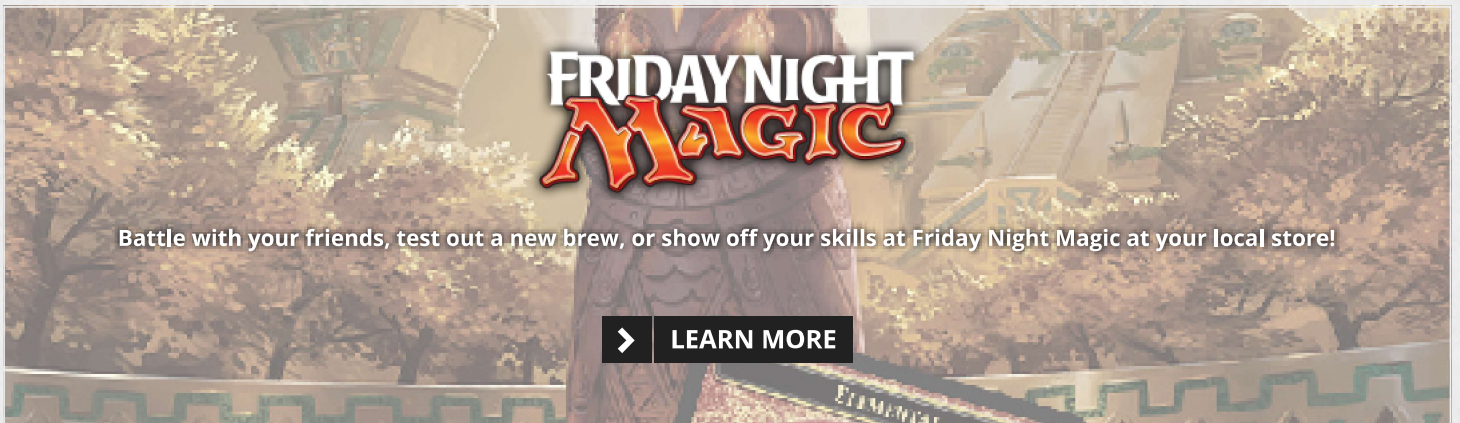
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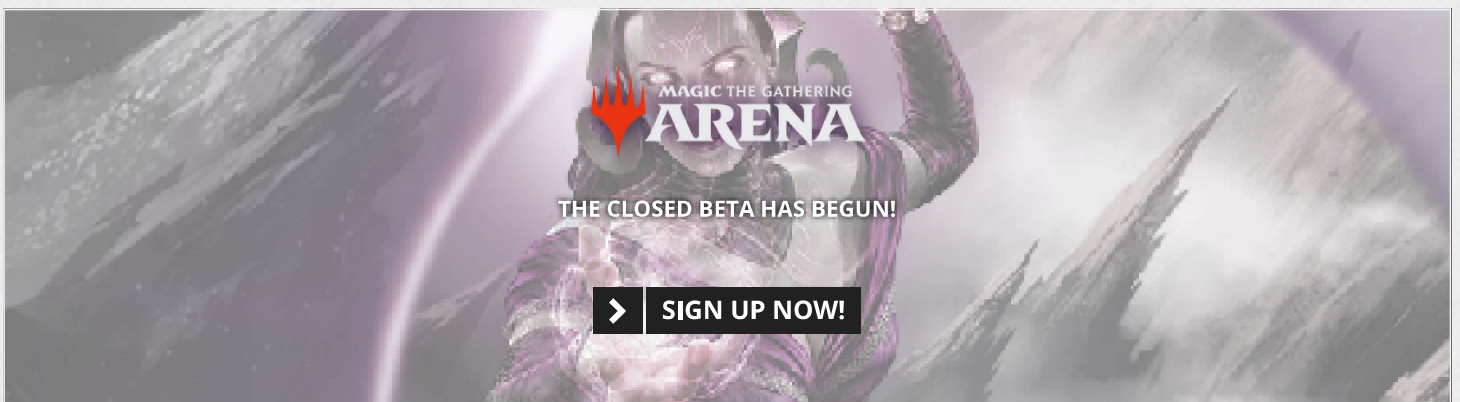


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