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June 30, 2003



Q: "Has a card ever been designed just because someone had a cool name they wanted to use? I think a card based on the name 'Deadlock' could be quite cool."
--Ian Pylvainen, West Bloomfield, MI

A: From **Brian Tinsman**, R&D game designer:
"I can't think of any that have been printed, although it's something designers have discussed. It's not a bad idea. We've done cards based on art and story concepts, so why not names? There actually have been a few thrown into design files here and there, but in general they tend to be cards that could go in any set, so they are often the first ones bumped out when we run out of space. When a good cycling card comes in, it can only go in the *Onslaught* block, so it will take the place of a card that's not tied to a block-specific mechanic. Sometimes cards get bumped from one set to the next like this for years on end. In the future I expect that we'll start to see a few name-inspired cards make it to print. Maybe Deadlock could go on the list of cool card names to think about."

June 27, 2003



Q: "[Stephen D'Angelo](#) maintains an excellent list of **Magic** rulings; who makes those rulings?"
--Matt McKenzie


A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:
"Most of the rulings are made by Wizards of the Coast's network representatives (netreps). The **Magic** Rules Team, a group of rules experts here at Wizards, also maintains the [Oracle](#) and the [Comprehensive Rulebook](#). The current Rules Team is Paul Barclay (R&D), Mike Donais (R&D), Jeff Donais (DCI), Elaine Chase (R&D), and Bryan Zembruski (Customer Service).

"The people who have contributed to the rulings summaries over the last ten years are:

- Beth Moursund (ex-**Magic** Rules Manager #2, and former MTG-L mailing list netrep)
- Brady Dommermuth (ex-**Magic** Rules Manager #2.5)
- Collin Jackson (DCI Rules Documentation netrep)
- Dan Gray (a former judge mailing list netrep)
- David DeLaney ("rec.games.trading-cards.magic.rules" newsgroup netrep)
- Jeff Jordan (MTG-L mailing list netrep)
- Paul Barclay (the current **Magic** Rules Manager, and former MTG-L mailing list netrep)
- Paul Peterson (a former MTG-L mailing list netrep)
- Rune Horvik (the current judge mailing list netrep)

- Stephen D'Angelo (Rules Summary netrep, and former MTG-L mailing list netrep)
- Tom Wylie (ex-**Magic** Rules Manager #1)
- Yonemura Kaoru (Japanese mailing list netrep)

"You can join the MTG-L mailing list, a great resource for rules questions, here: <http://oracle.wizards.com/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=mtg-l&A=1>."


June 26, 2003 

Q: "You talk a lot about the roles of designers versus those of developers, and often design stories are told about more interesting cards. But what about the more bland cards, like **Glory Seeker** or **Titanic Bulvox**? Who develops those, and who decides how many of these cards need to be in a set?"

--Drew Van Denver, Denver, CO

A: From **Randy Buehler**, Director of **Magic** R&D:

"Those cards follow the same basic process as everything else -- the designers put the set together with whatever they think is appropriate and then the developers take over, making sure that what the designers have done makes sense. Both the designers and the developers agree that we need a certain number of vanilla creatures, especially at common, and that those creatures are in the set mostly just to attack and block. However, since the bland cards aren't the most exciting things going on in the set, they rarely make for interesting anecdotes. It wouldn't be very exciting if I kept saying, "We needed a **small blue flier** and somebody said, 'What about a **Sea Sprite** for green?' and the rest of us said, 'Sure, that'll do.'"

June 25, 2003 

Q: "For the mechanic on **Scourge's Treetop Scout**, why did you choose that wording? Wouldn't it have made sense if you said 'Treetop Scout may attack as though it had flying,' staying consistent with the spider cards from earlier sets, like **Giant Spider**?"

--Jon Canezo, Texas


A: From **Del Laugel**, **Magic** editor:

"This question is easy to answer if we think about what the words 'attack' and 'block' really mean in a card's rules text. The concept of creature combat has great flavor: My creature attacks, your creature blocks, and then they fight. According to the rules, however, creatures don't get to decide whether they attack or block. *Players* make those decisions. That means you won't go far astray if you read 'attack' in a card's text as 'is declared as an attacker' and 'block' as 'is declared as a blocker.'

"If you apply that bit of knowledge to **Giant Spider's** ability, you get 'Giant Spider may be declared as a blocker as though it had flying.' That's pretty simple. The ability matters only while you're choosing which creatures will block, and you can ignore it the rest of the time. No surprise there. You can even see why **Giant Spider** can block **Treetop Scout**.

"Now let's look at the alternative **Treetop Scout** wording you asked about. The ability 'This may attack as though it had flying' means 'This creature may be declared as an attacker as though it had flying.' This ability lets the creature attack a player who has **Form of the Dragon** or **Moat** in play, for example, but it doesn't help the creature avoid blockers. (Cards like **Rolling Stones**, on the other hand, use 'may attack as though' abilities to great effect.)

"R&D wanted **Treetop Scout** to be harder to block, so that's why it has the wording it does."

June 24, 2003 

Q: "I understand that white is the color of protection, soldiers, and life, and that blue is the color for tricks and flyers. So why does white seem to be more powerful in the flying department than the original flying color (blue) when it is not a part of its flavor? If blue is shifting away from flying creatures to concentrate more on wizards and non-creature spells, does that open up the other colors to more flying creatures?" --Tom Lightfield, Austin, TX

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:

"There has been some confusion between blue and white and their relation to flying.

Let me try and see if I can set things straight. Blue is the color of flying. Blue, for example, represents the element of air. And as designer Elaine Chase likes to point out: 'The sky is blue.'

"The way this flavor is shown is threefold. First, blue has the greatest number of fliers, both in overall number and in percentage of its creatures. Second, blue is the color that most often grants the ability to fly. The flight-like enchant creatures are blue. The majority of the global enchantments, spells, and creature abilities that grant flying are blue. Third, blue has the most cards that interact positively with flying. That said, blue is the weakest color when it comes to creatures.

"White, on the other hand, is second when it comes to flying and near the top when it comes to creatures. Therefore white will have more tournament-level fliers than any other color as it has the best affinity for flying and creatures combined. This realization was the discovery R&D made over a year ago that's started showing up in recent sets.

"So to answer your question, blue is not moving away from being the flying color. It will still have the most fliers and the greatest number of cards that grant flying and interact positively with flying. White, though, will have the greatest number of tournament-viable fliers because it's strength in flying is mirrored with a strength in creatures."

June 23, 2003



Q: "In the pictures on [Parallel Thoughts](#) and [Long-Term Plans](#), the two wizards are holding a jar. Are these jars meant to be the 'library,' or something like a 'Memory Jar'? Is it the same wizard in the picture and if so does he have a name?" --Richard Flint, Colorado Springs, CO

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:

"The wizard represented on those cards is a Riptide Project researcher. The glass containers aren't meant to represent anything in particular. Perhaps the wizard is trying to find an elixir to help slow the effects of the **Mirari**'s magic, or even a poison to stop the rampaging slivers. In the abstract, the magical liquids represent the wizard's arcane research. As for the wizard's name, no, he doesn't have one, although the infamous Pemmin would look quite similar to this guy at the point in the Otaria story at which the events of the *Scourge* set occur."

June 20, 2003



Q: "I would like to know if you considering making an Online equivalent of the Fat Pack. I ask this because I only play **Magic Online**, but am still interested in the story and like the other stuff that comes with the sealed product. I think you could either mail the rest of the stuff - like what you do with redemption; or even convert some of the stuff to Digital Objects (perhaps an Avatar instead of the dice, and making an e-book version of the story)."

--Ivo de Medeiros Varzielas, Portugal

A: From **Paul Barclay**, TCG Rules Manager:

"We don't have any plans to make an online version of the Fat Pack at this time. The overwhelming majority of our customers prefer their novels in the traditional paper format. So, we'll be sticking with the paper format for our books. I can certainly see a point in the future when e-books are much more widely accepted, and we do convert some, or all, of our novels to the e-book format. If we do, I expect that the **Magic** novels will be among the first, so that they can be sold to **Magic Online** customers through the MTGO online store.

"For now, **Magic** Fat Packs and novels can be found at all kinds of stores. If you're in the US or Canada, you can use our [retail locator](#) to find the store nearest you that sells **Magic** products."

June 19, 2003



Q: "What ever happened to the idea of black spells being self detrimental for large effects--such as [Ashes to Ashes](#)? Take damage or pay life, sacrifice permanents, etc., in exchange for something really powerful. This was black's 'theme' for a long, long time. Some new cards carry this idea, such as [Grinning Demon](#), but most big spells coming out of black are lacking that old disease goodness."

--Martin Audette, Gainseville, FL

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer: "This theme is still a black theme. The following *Scourge* cards use some form of sacrifice or life loss as a cost (upkeep, activation, etc.) or have some negative effect associated with them coming into or leaving play:

- **Carrion Feeder**
- **Death's-Head Buzzard**
- **Zombie Cutthroat**
- **Skulltap**
- **Putrid Raptor**
- **Chill Haunting**
- **Unspeakable Symbol**

"I do agree though that this theme is currently at a low point. As I often explain, **Magic's** themes ebb and flow as the game constantly evolves. In short don't worry, black is in no danger of giving up its desire to hurt its caster."

June 18, 2003



Q: "Why is **Day of the Dragons** blue? Wouldn't it make sense to be red? I mean, it is dragons."

-- Brodie Widdifield

A: From **Brian Tinsman**, R&D game designer:

"Here's my comment from the original *Scourge* design file:

"The coolest illusion ever - an army of dragons. But the illusion can still be dispelled."

"The concept is that it's all a big illusion making each of your creatures look like a flying red dragon. When the illusion is dispelled, all your creatures are transformed back to their normal states. I felt this was a sneaky, underhanded way for a wizard to make dragons, so it seemed very blue to me. Red is more straightforward. I don't think red would want dragons that could vanish to a **Naturalize**."

June 17, 2003



Q: "What are the weird swirly people on the *Scourge* cards meant to be? I've seen them on **Scornful Egoist**, **Grip of Chaos**, and **Parallel Thoughts**, but I'm sure they pop up more often. I thought they might be avatars of the mana in Otaria, but if so where are the green, white and black ones?"

--Hayden Neill, Halifax, NS

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:

"In a previous Ask Wizards [response](#), I explained how the creatures on Otaria are being twisted and evolved by the **Mirari's** sickly magic. The 'liquid glass' creatures you see in the *Scourge* set are the final mutation/evolution step for Otaria's wizards. Their corporeal forms are almost drifting away -- they're becoming creatures of pure thought. The one on **Grip of Chaos** has been turned from bluish to red by the strange power of the enchantment."

June 16, 2003



Q: "How is it determined which expansion of a card is displayed in the pop-up box that appears when you click on a card's name (is it the Oracle)? For example, **Kismet** appears in *Legends* and *Sixth Edition* (at least) but the display shows the Legends version. Also, why can you enter a legend's name without the title, like **Jareth** instead of Jareth, Leonine Titan, and still get the card to show up (and why you can enter 'Tim' to display **Prodigal Sorcerer**)? Thanks."

-Stephen Frimmel, Carrboro, NC

A: From **Doug Beyer**, **Magic** Web Developer:

"Thanks for your questions, Stephen. The '**autocard window**' (which is what we call that pop-up window that displays the image and Oracle text of a **Magic** card) follows these rules:

1. If, for some reason, the card's expansion is explicitly specified in the tagging of a MagicTheGathering.com article, it shows that version of the card. For example, I could specify the **Tempest Disenchant**, and the autocard window would show that. (At this point there is no handy way to go directly to a


- particular expansion's art from the autocard window, but stay tuned; we're always working on ways to improve our web site and put newer and better **Magic** tools at your disposal.)
2. If the expansion is not specified, the autocard window checks to see whether the card is on a short list of special names that serve as abbreviations or nicknames for cards. This is why **Jareth** works all by himself -- the list says 'If someone enters *Jareth*, send it all the information for *Jareth*, *Leonine Titan*.' Similarly **Tim**, **Ernie**, and **Mr. Babycakes**, popular nicknames for certain cards, bring up their corresponding cards. Finally **Mark Rosewater**, **Jon Finkel**, and certain other people's names bring up cards that have some special relationship to them.
 3. If the expansion is not specified, and the card name is not on the special list, AND the card is in Standard (Type 2), the autocard window displays the version of the card from its most recent Standard-legal expansion. That's why **Birds of Paradise** shows (at this writing, in June of 2003) the *Seventh Edition* version, and **Shock** (again, in 2003) shows the *Onslaught* version. This allows people to see the versions they are probably most familiar with, and to illustrate strategy articles or tournament coverage with what is probably the version of the card being played at the time.
 4. Lastly, if the expansion is not specified, the card name is not on the special list, and the card is *not* in Standard, the autocard window shows the *oldest* version of the card, via an exact text match. This answers why **Kismet** shows the *Legends* version, or why **Terror** shows the antiquated Beta version. Why did we set it up this way? Because old cards are cool.

Hope that answers your questions. Keep an eye on MagicTheGathering.com for enhancements to the autocard feature, and for even fancier ways to search for **Magic** cards."

June 13, 2003 

Q: "Why doesn't *Scourge* have a theme deck with black in it?"
--Eli Major, Ferdinand, IN

A: From **Henry Stern**, Research & Development:
"Well, there are no set rules as to theme decks' colors. In general, we like for there to be a nice mix of colors for the four decks in a set, and also to have a nice mix over the block. Sometimes that means we have to leave a color out once in a while. But in this case, one of the *Scourge* Theme Decks (['Max Attax'](#)) does have black in it."


June 12, 2003 

Q: "I've noticed that in the '[Eighth Edition Core Set Rollout](#)' you mention 'Core Set' and 'Core Game.' Now the question is what is the difference between those two?"
--Casimir Darksinger

A: From **Aaron Forsythe**, Content Manager:
"We covered this in a [Magic Arcana](#) a little while back.

"The Core Set is the new name for the base set; *Eighth Edition* is the upcoming Core Set.

"The Core Game is the new name for the two-player starter set that will include two simple decks, a rulebook, play guides, a play mat, and a **Magic Online** CD-ROM. Players new to **Magic** will want to begin with the Core Game."

June 11, 2003 

Q: "Would you ever consider making an expansion or block set in a more 'modern' setting like the real world of today?"
--Jeff Hangege, Webster, South Dakota

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:
"Thanks for your question, Jeff. Nothing's 'off limits' in terms of what we might consider for a **Magic** setting. But we do believe that the game needs to stay true to the swords-and-sorcery genre. Any setting that could incorporate spellcasting and cool monsters is a possibility. Will we ever explore an Elizabethan setting? Victorian? Modern-day urban? Only time will tell."

June 10, 2003



Q: "It seems that some block mechanics cannot be developed fully in just three sets. Will you consider making some block mechanics that lasts for two or more blocks?"
--Devin Brown, Baton Rouge, LA

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:
"Many block mechanics we introduce are not 'tapped out' in just three sets. Sometimes we allow the mechanic to become an ongoing staple. The recent example of this would be double strike which was introduced in *Legions* but has gone on to appear in *Scourge* and will also be in the *Mirrodin* block. Other times, we bring the mechanic back years to let it further evolve. The most recent example of this is cycling which was brought back in *Onslaught* with a few new twists.

"Will we ever create a block mechanic that we plan to use for two full years before we return it to hiatus? Possibly. We do like to break our own rules. When would this happen? I can't give away all our secrets."

June 9, 2003



Q: "With all the printed **Magic** cards since the Alpha release, are you not afraid that you'll be running out of card names for the spell you create soon?"
--Ronnie V. Bernardo, Manila, Philippines

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, **Magic** creative coordinator:
"Thanks for the question, Ronnie. I don't think we'll run out of names any time soon. The English language is very large, and it would take a significant amount of time just to use every **Magic**-appropriate word. Then, if you add on the fact that most of our card names contain more than one word, you have a huge pool of word combinations to work with. Finally, you need to take into account that a portion of the names in every set are made up. When you combine these three factors, you have a nearly infinite pool of names to work with.

"There is a small exception here. We do try to save better names for the better cards. For example, there is a common belief in R&D that there is a finite number of good/simple names for countering spells. So, we do make an effort to conserve those names for the good countering spells."

June 6, 2003



Q: "Is there a location where all of the symbols for the various sets can be found? With so many different sets out there it is sometimes difficult to tell them apart."
--Morwren

A: From **Aaron Forsythe**, Content Manager:
"There is a page that not many people know about that lists the expansion symbols of all the Expert-level expansions. You can get to it by clicking on the word 'Products' in the box in the upper left-hand corner of any page on the site, or just click here:
<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=magic/products/cardsets>.

"Note that this just shows the normal Expert-level expansions; recent core sets have obvious symbols (VI for *Sixth Edition*, 7 for *Seventh Edition*). There are also several other expansion symbols that we have used, including a broken egg (*Unglued*), a stone portal (*Portal*), a pentagon (*Portal Second Age*), a Chinese character (*Portal Three Kingdoms*), a mace (*Beatdown* box set), a stylized 'D' (*Deckmasters* box set), a pen (promotional cards), a dragon (*Nalathni Dragon*), a star (*Starter*), and a few other really obscure ones. One day soon we'll have them all on the site in an easy-to-find place."

June 5, 2003



Q: "How do you pronounce the first set of the next block, *Mirrodin*? My friends say it's pronounced 'mer-ih-dee-en,' but I think it sound more like 'meer-oh-deen.' Who is more right?"
--Adam Kreger San Diego, California

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** creative director:
"Here at Wizards, we pronounce *Mirrodin* this way: 'MEER-oh-din.' But you can

pronounce it however you want."

June 4, 2003



Q: "Why was **Tsunami** printed in Alpha through *Fifth Edition* while **Acid Rain** was in only *Legends*? They both cost the same and are perfect reflections in the color wheel, but why did Wizards decide to short blue on this color hoser?"
--Jon Chou, Los Angeles, USA

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:

"During Alpha, Richard Garfield explored the idea of having reflections where both colors had the same but mirrored effect. While there are cases where this has proven to work well, in general it caused a major problem in that it allowed colors to do things that they aren't supposed to.

"As I've explained many times, the color definitions of the color wheel are very important to the balance of the game. If one color could do everything, then all the top decks would just be mono-colored decks of that color. The color wheel ensures that no one color is unbeatable. And it forces players to venture to add other colors to their deck.

"**Tsunami** is a fine green card because green is able to destroy lands. **Acid Rain** is a bad blue card because blue isn't supposed to be good at destruction of permanents. Land, in fact, is one of blue's biggest problems because it cannot be countered. This is why **Tsunami** has been reprinted multiple times and **Acid Rain** has not. In addition, **Acid Rain** is on a list of cards (called the Reserved List) that we've promised never to reprint.

"In short, we can't reprint **Acid Rain**, but even if we could, we wouldn't."

June 3, 2003



Q: "Being particularly fond of 'cantrips' (I have a deck of nothing but cards that end with 'draw a card'), I was curious: how do you decide if a card ends up as a cantrip? Does it take a card that would otherwise be weak or underpowered? Do you examine similar cards and effects and decide to add on 'draw a card' arbitrarily?"
--Ted Cain Greeley, CO

A: From **Randy Buehler**, Director of **Magic** R&D:

"The most common scenario is that we have an effect we want to do, but it's worth less than one mana and thus we figure no one would play it unless we give them the extra 'bribe' of also getting to draw a card (which is an effect that we figure is worth around 2 mana). **Zap** is a good example of such a card. In addition, we will sometimes put expensive cantrips into a set, like **Sudden Strength**, because we think they will be interesting in that set's Limited environment. However, if a set already has a card-utility mechanic (like cycling, for example) then we add cycling to those sorts of spells instead of cantrip."

June 2, 2003



Q: "I was wondering if you've ever tested decks in your Future Future League that you considered to be tier-1 tournament decks but that were never discovered by the public later?" --Daniel Röttger, Trier, Germany

A: From **Brian Schneider**, Research & Development:

"There have been a few decks that we've tested in the FFL that we thought would be tier 1 but didn't really make a showing in the real world. The best examples would be from the *Invasion* block: Black/white Arena (it showed up at fringe levels) and R/W aggro (a deck that I hated then, and still hate today -- I just didn't think it was very good, but couldn't convince people to stop playing it... so for a month or so I kept running into it -- which was good for me... but bad for 'us.') that loosely showed up as a R/W/U deck with **Lightning Angels** and **Meddling Mages**. For the last year or so though, we've done a pretty good job of predicting what actually showed up in the real world. Many of the decks we tested are very similar to the ones you're playing now."

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