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August 29, 2003

Q: "Brian Kibler [mentioned](#) that he didn't play in the last 3 rounds of Swiss at Nationals, instead he intentionally drew into the top 8. What is the DCI policy on this, has there and will there ever be a reconsideration or a revision of this policy?"
--Matt Gunn, Cincinnati, OH

A: From **Chris Galvin**, Director of Organized Play:
"Hi, Matt. You ask a challenging question. While the policy is clear, opinions are divided on this topic both internally here at DCI HQ as well as among judges and players.

"Current DCI policy is that intentional draws are legal at any point in the match. This policy applies to concessions as well. What is *not* legal is offering consideration for an ID or concession. That constitutes bribery, which is against DCI policy. Cash or the promise to concede a match in the future are the most common considerations. However, if you simply decide to offer an ID and your opponent decides to accept, with no quid pro quo as the lawyers say, you're within the rules.

"Why does the policy work this way? Primarily because there is no reliable way to enforce any other policy. This is easier to understand when you think about concessions, but the same logic applies to draws, which can be forced through 'clock management behavior.' If the DCI made it a rule that you can't voluntarily concede a match that you wanted to concede, you could play in such a way as to throw the game. This would then put the tournament judge into the position of having to evaluate your play decisions to determine whether or not you were violating the policy. Every decision you make about blocking and attacking schemes, targeting, or whether or not to play a card would be subject to review. By the very nature of the game, we don't want to put tournament officials into a position of second guessing play judgment calls made by competitors. Here in the DCI, we've been turning this issue over and over since the start of the Pro Tour in 1996, and it always comes down to this issue. Because of this thorny situation, we do not foresee changing the policy in the future.

"Note that tournament **Magic** is not the only individual competition to have some amount of controversy surrounding this sort of cooperative behavior. It is also common in racing, especially cycling. Lance Armstrong hasn't won the Tour de France all those years simply because he's an amazing athlete. He has an entire team which is alternately helping him out or slowing down his closest competitors, not trying to win the race themselves. His competitors, meanwhile, have their own teams which just aren't as good at dealing with Lance. If the DCI ID rules bug you (like they sometimes bug me), thinking about it in this light might change your perspective."

August 28, 2003

Q: "Why were there changes in rarities of cards for *Eighth Edition*? For example, why

was **Urza's Armor** changed from an uncommon to rare? Was it that Wizards thought it was too powerful to be an uncommon? And the **Circles of Protection** from common to uncommon?"

--Michael Brandon, Manchester, PA

A: From **Robert Gutschera**, Research & Development:

"Usually, we don't like to change the rarities of cards when we reprint them. But sometimes we make exceptions, especially when we reprint cards in the core set. Keep in mind that the core set is meant to be introductory, so that a card that might seem fine as an uncommon, say, in an expert set might be better as a rare in a core set. Also, other cards in the set may affect rarities. Finally, sometimes we just feel the original rarity wasn't ideal and it would be best to change it.

"**Rukh Egg** is a card we wanted to put in *Eighth* because it was cool, but we had a 'no token creatures in the core set' policy because we want to keep the core set simple. (Token creatures are simple enough once you're used to them, but they are potentially confusing for beginners.) So we decided to include it but make it rare because of its complexity. The fact that for all practical purposes commons from *Arabian Nights* are rare made the decision easier for us.

"**Noble Purpose** was uncommon in *Masques*, but we made it rare in *Eighth* because we already had **Spirit Link** at uncommon. **Noble Purpose** is a larger-scale version of **Spirit Link**, and it seemed that it should be more rare.

"The Circles of Protection just seemed to us to belong at uncommon. They filled up too many of White's common slots. Also, cards that hose particular other colors we like to keep at uncommon or rare because of their narrowness."

August 27, 2003



Q: "On the site magicworldchampionship.com, it is stated that one of the ways to qualify for the **Magic** World Championships is to have 20 or more Pro Tour points. What are Pro Tour points, and how can they be accumulated?"

--James Watson, London

A: From **Andy Heckt**, Pro Tour Player Coordinator:

"Pro Tour points (or simply 'pro points') are awarded to players based on their finishes at Pro Tour, Grand Prix, and World Championship events. Pro points are used to calculate pro standings, determine the Pro Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year, and to grant invitations to certain tournaments.

"Following each Pro Tour and Worlds event, players are ranked according to pro points accumulated from the preceding World Championships and five Pro Tour events, including the Grand Prix tournaments that are held before the Pro Tour event or Worlds in question and after the previous Pro Tour event or Worlds (whichever is most recent). These rankings, called *pro standings*, are referred to by the name of the last Pro Tour or Worlds event included in that standing.

"Pro standings are used to determine byes for Grand Prix tournaments and invitations to certain other tournaments, like the **Magic** Invitational.

"This information can be found in a document known as the Invitation Policy. If you are interested in pursuing tournament and/or professional-level **Magic**, you should be aware of that document, as well as the Universal Tournament Rules, Magic Floor Rules, and the Appeals Policy. All of this information can be found at www.thedci.com.

"For those interested, [here are the final 2003 Pro Standings](#)."

August 26, 2003



Q: "My question is about the reprinting of **Collective Unconscious**. Surely this card is out of flavor (and mechanics) for green. Can you tell me how this cards fits into green portion of the pie?"

--Daniel, Western Australia

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

"Card drawing is a big enough mechanic that R&D actually allocates it into several different colors. Blue is the main color and thus almost any kind of card drawing is fair game for blue. Black gets card drawing at the cost of life (a la **Necropotence**). Artifacts has its niche (mostly tomes and **Howling Mine** variants). All the colors are allowed

card drawing at a low level, a la cantrips. And green? Well, green has a history of gaining card advantage through its creatures. This is why we allow green creatures that draw cards when they deal damage or come into play as well as green creatures that get you other creatures out of your library. **Collective Unconscious** is an extension of this philosophy."

August 25, 2003



Q: "Have you ever thought of making common and uncommon Dragon creature cards so they could be more playable? If not, could you? I have my own Dragon deck with 11 Dragons but all of them are rare and too expensive to use seriously. Even though it does work pretty well, it would be better with some cheaper Dragons in it."
--Chris Gerhardt, Grand Ledge, MI

A: From **Mark Gottlieb**, Research & Development:

"We have thought of that. In fact, there's been active debate recently about this very topic. The arguments in favor are pretty much the same as yours: Dragons are cool, players like them, why not make some of them more accessible? A smaller uncommon Dragon seems entirely reasonable to some R&D folks. The 'Keep the Dragons Endangered' forces, on the other hand, believe that keeping them rare is essential to keeping them cool. These are creatures of immense size, force, and magical ability who live in remote areas and have profound impacts on battle when they show up. They're no Goblins. In fact, they're the opposite of Goblins: Most Goblins are common and uncommon, and while they're weak individually, they're powerful in groups. Dragons are game-changing all by themselves. For both flavor and power concerns, there's a strong push to keep all of them rare. If Dragons became commonplace, they-by definition-would no longer be special.

"The debate continues. I wouldn't be surprised to see an uncommon Dragon make it into a set . . . but I wouldn't hold my breath until it happens either. In the meantime, your deck can be sped up with some of the uncommon Dragon helpers in *Scourge*, such as **Krosan Drover** and **Dragonspeaker Shaman**."

August 22, 2003



Q: "Some cards in *Eighth Edition* received new art and others didn't. How did you decide which cards received new art and which ones didn't (It seems that any card that represented characters from the *Weatherlight* Saga automatically received new art, but there are others that also received new art)?"
--Jonathan Cicci, Peckville, PA

A: From Jeremy Cranford, **Magic** Art Director:

"With Eighth Edition we decided to have players vote online for a lot of the art where there were several options. For other cards, we commissioned new art if we felt the old art went against brand values, represented things or events no longer relevant to **Magic**-such as Merfolk or plot events from the *Weatherlight* Saga-or if we thought the old art was just of poor quality."

August 21, 2003



Q: "Why don't you do promo cards any more like **Nalathni Dragon** or **Arena** that aren't part of an expansion but are only available through some special means?"
--Nick Halasek, Richmond, VA

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

"I believe the question you are asking is why doesn't Wizards produce functionally unique **Magic** promo cards? (That is cards that has a mechanic or combination of mechanics not found anywhere else.) There are a number of reasons, but the most important one is that when we did it many years ago, it greatly upset the players. For example, **Nalathni Dragon** was given to attendees of the 1994 gaming convention known as Dragon*Con held in Atlanta, Georgia. The vast majority of **Magic** players have no means to attend a convention in Atlanta.

"Why is this a problem? Many collectibles do promotional items sold only at specific events. The problem is that **Magic** is a game and each card has a functional place in that game. Assume **Nalathni Dragon** turned out to be an important tournament card (and note this problem did happen with one of the book promotional cards, **Mana Crypt**). Is it fair that players who live near Georgia have stronger decks than those who do not? The end result is that Wizards decided to eliminate functionally unique

promotional cards and instead create promotional cards that were variants of existing cards (premium, alternate art, etc.)."

August 20, 2003



Q: "I was wondering if you could tell me about the *Portal* sets. I am a casual **Magic** player, and I started playing magic around the time of the release of *Mercadian Masques*. But I have ended up with some older cards. While putting a deck together, I noticed I had a **Temple Acolyte**, which seemed a pretty good card, but I didn't recognize the expansion symbol. I found out it was *Portal Second Age*, and I read somewhere that *Portal* cards aren't 'real' **Magic** cards. Could you tell me more about this please?"

--Michael Slater, Nottingham, UK

A: From **Aaron Forsythe**, Content Manager: "Well, *Portal* cards and their kin (including *Portal Second Age*, *Portal Three Kingdoms*, and *Starter* sets from 1999 and 2000) are real cards in the way that you can hold them in your hand, but not real in the way that most of them are not tournament-legal.

"These sets were produced as a means to introduce new players to the game, and as such have different wordings than most normal cards. For example, 'intercept' was used in place of the word 'block,' and instants were disguised as sorceries that you could play on your opponent's turn.

"Because these cards were not quite compatible with expert-level **Magic** rules, the sets were never legal for tournament play. So you can't include **Temple Acolyte** in any tournament **Magic** deck you build. The exceptions to this rule are *Portal* cards that have appeared with the same name in 'real' sets. Your *Portal Seasoned Marshal*, *Portal Second Age Lone Wolf*, *Portal Three Kingdoms Blaze*, and *Starter Coercion* are all legal in Type 2 tournaments, as all these cards also appear in *Eighth Edition*.

"Many casual playgroups allow *Portal* cards when playing for fun. Ask your friends if they object to you using them ahead of time.

"R&D has no plans to produce any more beginner-level products that are not tournament legal."

August 19, 2003



Q: "Why do none of the green creatures in the Core Set have trample?"

--Jack Reese, Sioux Falls, SD

A: From **Elaine Chase**, Research & Development:

"Trample is actually a pretty difficult concept to understand. Before you yell, 'how hard is it to just give the "extra" damage to your opponent?' let me explain. If all trample ever did was have one attacker trample over one blocker with no other effects, it would be pretty easy. But let's run through these common scenarios:

- What if a trample creature is blocked by more than one creature?
- What if the trampler is blocked, but all the blockers get removed from combat before damage is assigned?
- What if your opponent has something that prevents damage? Can you choose not to trample? How about only trampling some of the damage, but not all?
- What if the blocker already has some damage on it?
- What if the blocker has protection from the trampler?

"While we expect that expert players have the will and the means to figure most of these questions out, they create quite an obstacle for the new player. In fact, 'how does trample work?' is a question that gets sent into this website and our customer service teams by the ton.

"Because of the high level of confusion, the core set gets the slimmed-down version of trample that you see on **Lone Wolf** and **Rhox**. By giving the option to hit your opponent instead of the blocker, the new player gets to taste the easy part of trample without all the mess that goes along with it.

"Just because trample doesn't appear in the core set, don't be worried that there's some master plan to get rid of trample for good. We plan on it having a home in expert level sets for a very, very long time."

August 18, 2003



Q: "With the advent of *Eighth Edition* and the phasing out of Merfolk for more appropriate creature types (such as Wizard), shouldn't the flavor text of cards like **Tidal Kraken** have been updated to something completely different?"
--Scott Smith NSW, Australia

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, **Magic** creative coordinator:
"Thanks for the question, Scott. As you know, we're currently not using Merfolk as a creature type in **Magic**. In trying to improve **Magic**'s creative, we took a close look at blue creatures and a few questions came up: 'Does it really make sense to summon aquatic creatures to land battles?', 'How do water-bound and land-bound creatures fight?', etc. (see Brady's response to a [previous Ask Wizards](#) for details.)

"However, that does not mean there are no merfolk in the Multiverse. We're not rewriting history. The Mer empire still exists, we're just not giving its citizens their own cards."

August 15, 2003



Q: "I read on your site that there are 34 collectible box toppers associated with *Eighth Edition*. I only have 33. Which one am I missing?" --Angry Joe

A: From **Del Laugel**, **Magic** editor:
"If you have thirty-three of the *Eighth Edition* oversized cards, then you have them all. Congratulations!

"The missing thirty-fourth card, **Giant Badger**, was pulled at the last minute and the rest of the cards were renumbered to hide the gap. The [Arcana you read](#) was based on information in an internal database that hadn't been updated.

"**Giant Badger** was put in the *Eighth Edition* core set to represent the handful of special promotional cards that have been released in **Magic** history. If you bought the novel *Shattered Chains* back in 1995, you could mail in for a **Giant Badger** card (the offer expired in 1996). In fact, that was the only way you could get a **Giant Badger**. There isn't a special "promotional card from a novel" logo, so the best we could do was to put the novel name on the oversized card. Unfortunately, that made *Shattered Chains* look too much like a **Magic** set name, and Marketing decided that the potential confusion outweighed the coolness factor of having an oversized **Giant Badger** as a box topper.

"[Today's Magic Arcana](#) shows how the non-existent Badger box topper would have looked."

August 14, 2003



Q: "Why did the original dual lands (**Tundra**, et al) remain legal in Extended a few years ago despite the fact that a.) they were strictly better than basic lands, and b.) the sets they were printed in were never part of the format?"
--Daniel Heacox, Atlanta, GA, USA

A: From **Mike Donais**, Research & Development:
"We did this because we didn't want to hurt the secondary market on dual lands without giving people fair warning. The idea of Extended rotating was going to seem drastic to many players; this was one way to make it less drastic. We won't be doing anything like that in the future."

August 13, 2003



Q: "What are some of the most rare cards ever printed? I'm not talking about **Moxes** or anything like that. I've seen blank cards and blue **Hurricanes**."
--Jack Roosevelt

A: From **Brian Tinsman**, R&D game designer:
"The rarest cards fall into two categories: misprints and specials. The blank cards you've seen are either misprints or R&D playtest cards that were never used. One famous mistake was a run of *Fallen Empires* that was printed with backs from *Wyvern*, another TCG being manufactured at the same factory. The rarest misprints, and among the rarest **Magic** cards in existence, are those [blue Hurricanes](#). They're from a

printing nicknamed 'Summer **Magic**.' In the summer of '94, Wizards realized one printing of *Revised* had severe mistakes, with the art almost too dark to see on many cards. Wizards recalled the entire print run and had them all destroyed. Well, almost all of them. About four cases (40 display boxes) accidentally made it to the public in the UK and Tennessee. Today a Summer **Magic Birds of Paradise** is worth well over a thousand dollars.

"Another misprint was a series of foil Friday Night **Magic** promotional cards that were added to Japanese *Urza's Legacy* and *Urza's Destiny* sheets as test runs to see if the print process was working right. Those cards had no text, just mana costs and art, and were supposed to have been destroyed. Some of them, like **Lightning Bolt**, accidentally made it into booster packs and are now among the rarest of all cards.

"Special printings are cards that were produced to commemorate some event and given to the participants only. The rarest is probably the [1996 World Champion](#) card, of which only one is supposed to exist. It was encased in a trophy and awarded to Tom Chanpheng, the winner of that tournament. Wizards never printed any other cards for later World Champions. The next rarest is the card Proposal, which Richard Garfield had printed and slipped into a deck in order to propose to his soon-to-be wife, Lily. About seven of these were given to members of their wedding party. Richard also used **Magic** cards to announce two more special events, the birth of his two children. Splendid Genesis (about 150 cards) and Fraternal Exaltation (about 250 cards) were given to friends and coworkers.

"Sought after by some collectors are cards altered by designers to change their functionality. Although not legal for tournament play, it's generally accepted that if you can get Richard Garfield to change the mana cost or abilities on a card and sign it, you can play it as written. It's rumored that there's a 3/3 **Llanowar Elves** out there somewhere.

"Thanks to my fellow designer Mike Elliott for helping me out with a bunch of this info."

August 12, 2003



Q: "Why does Wizards R&D consider regeneration to be such a dangerous mechanic? There appear to be a disproportionate number of cards that disable regeneration (*Wrath of God*, *Dark Banishing*, etc.) in contrast to cards that punish other mechanics."

--Burgess Smith Des Moines, IA

A: From **Worth Wollpert**, Research & Development:

"We don't necessarily consider it a dangerous mechanic, in fact we just recently discussed something very similar to your question in our standard Tuesday **Magic** meeting. Most of us were in agreement that we'd like regeneration to matter a little bit more than it does right now, so look for some cards in the future that take that ability into account more than we do now. You can see some of the new policy in effect on a card like *Akroma's Vengeance*."

August 11, 2003



Q: "Will one need to have the basic lands and extra cards only found in the starter game - like *Giant Octopus* - to redeem a set of *Eighth Edition* from **MTGO**?"

--Rick Desbo, OK

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

"No, you do not need to have the S-series cards in order to redeem a set of *Eighth Edition* on **Magic Online**. Only the cards that appear in booster packs are necessary. This does include one of each basic land picture."

August 8, 2003



Q: "I've heard there is a set list of cards Wizards has vowed never to reprint like *Terror* and *Lightning Bolt*. Does it really exist and if so is there any way to see the list? Just for fun."

--Matt Dobratz Hutchinson, MN

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

"Somewhere out there is a list of cards that Wizards has agreed not to reproduce. Actually, [here it is](#) (it's called the Reserved List). It is comprised of rares from older

sets. **Terror** and **Lightning Bolt** can both be reprinted (most commons are eligible to be repeated). They just haven't been in some time."

August 7, 2003



Q: "Have you ever considered adding a dice roll mechanic to the real game? After all, you do have coin flips."

--Shane Johnson, Tampa, FL

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

"Yes, we have. We went so far as to actually try out the idea in the non-tournament legal expansion *Unglued*. Research on that set showed that overall players did not like dice rolling. (It was incidentally one of the least popular elements of *Unglued*.) Random cards such as coin-flipping cards are skewed towards casual play as R&D doesn't like their impact on tournaments. *Unglued* was designed to appeal to casual players. Thus, if the casual players don't like dice rolling (and remember that they're target audience of the mechanic) then it has no place in a tournament legal set.

"So, yes we have considered and no, we aren't planning on using it in tournament legal expansions."

August 6, 2003



Q: "According to [Card of the Day](#), **Seeker of Skybreak** was cut from *Eighth Edition* 'when it was determined that untapping creatures was no longer a green ability.' Who made that determination, and if that's now the case with green, how did **Wirewood Symbiote** come about?"

--Wirewood Jim

A: From **Devin Low**, Research & Development:

"You ask a perceptive question. As you know, **Magic** R&D has been reviewing and adjusting the color pie for over a year now. As part of that review, we found that blue, white, red, and green all included the ability to untap creatures. We needed to focus this mechanic more precisely. It was decided that blue, the color of *Eighth Edition's* **Twiddle**, **Intruder Alarm**, and **Puppeteer**, is the king of tapping and untapping permanents. White cards like **Master Decoy** can tap creatures to lock them down, but from now on white can only untap creatures with combat tricks like **Inspirit**. Red gets to untap creatures only in a very specific case: getting additional attacks from them, as on **Relentless Assault** and **Threaten**. Finally, we let green keep old **Ley Druid's** ability to untap lands, but took away the ability for green to untap creatures.

"Then why does **Wirewood Symbiote** untap creatures? Simple: R&D made the decision to take untapping creatures out of green while developing *Eighth Edition*, after the deadline for *Scourge*."

August 5, 2003



Q: "Have you ever considered updating the creature types in the Oracle, like changing **War Mammoth** from a Mammoth to a Beast? I think it would allow older cards to fit in more readily with today's environment."

--Tim Courtney Hampstead, MD

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

"Yes, we have thought about that. In fact, it was the subject of a lot of passionate debate several months ago. On the one hand, there are definitely some cards with creature types that we would do differently if we were doing those creatures today. On the other hand, however, it's annoying when the cards don't work the way you think they do when you read them. We would like **Magic** players to have confidence that if they just read their cards and play them the way they think they should, they'll be right. For example, the card that sparked this debate in R&D (and continues to cause it to flare up whenever the subject comes up again) is **Savannah Lions**. Back in Alpha, Richard made it a 'Summon - Lion.' In the decade since then, however, we've decided that we don't want to support both cats and lions, so now whenever we do a creature that is a lion (biologically speaking) we give it creature type Cat. Once we decided the **Savannah Lions** was coming back in *Eighth Edition*, we had to decide what to do about its creature type. Should it be a Cat so it can go into Cat decks and be affected by other cards that affect Cats? Or should it be a Lion so that anyone who plays with versions of the card from Alpha, Beta, Unlimited, *Revised*, and *Fourth Edition* will have the correct type printed on their cards? In the end, we decided not to change the

Lions. We also decided that, in general, we should not update creature types of old creatures because the pain of having to keep track of errata is just bigger than the gain of having cards work with more recent tribal cards."

August 4, 2003



Q: "When did you bring in the colour coding the expansion symbols to denote rarity, also how would you tell the rarity of older cards before you used this system?"
--David Bray, Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia

A: From **Doug Beyer**, Magic Web Developer:
"The first expansion that used color-coded expansion symbols was *Exodus*; starting in 1998, you could look at your **Pygmy Troll** or your **Elven Palisade** or your **Survival of the Fittest** and instantly know your odds of opening another one.

"Before *Exodus*, there was no way to look at a card out of context and instantly know its rarity. If you noticed the order in which the card came out of its original booster pack, you might have had a clue of its rarity; depending on what set it was, the rare might be the last card, or the one right between the uncommons and the commons. But the ordering patterns varied set to set, so that method was sketchy unless you were opening multiple packs of the same set to compare against.

"Your best option was to look up a published spoiler list from a trusted source, like *Duelist* magazine. If you didn't have one on hand -- for example, if you were at the card shop, sweating, trying to decide whether to trade your **Birds of Paradise** for his **Demonic Tutor**, circa 1995 -- you were just out of luck. Well-informed collectors got the better of many trades in that era."

August 1, 2003



Q: "*Chronicles* has always seemed to be the wicked step-child of Wizards, however it was one of my favorite sets. Since Core Sets are only released every second year, a reprint expansion would seem to be a great way to both expand the Standard cardpool and fill a hole in Wizards' release schedule. Would you ever print another 'reprint expansion'?"
--Matt McKenzie

A: From **Bill Rose**, Vice President of R&D:
"Wizards has no plans for another reprint expansion. We will continue to publish new editions of the Core Set with new and different reprints, as well as include reprints in expert-level expansions (**Lobotomy** and **Swat** are recent examples).

"We're happy with the Standard cardpool size maxing out at around 1500. Two three-set blocks plus one Core Set is just over 1500 cards."

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