

Bring the team. Share the glory. A Prerelease First

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For all the details on the upcoming Mirrodin Prerelease events, click [here](#).

I've mentioned in [Serious Fun](#) before how much I like team sealed format. It's as close as tournaments get to casual play – and it gets pretty close, indeed. Entering an event as a team automatically means you have comrades on your side, and that your individual goals are not as important as the team's success. It's a completely different dynamic from duels, and it warms my heart to see so many pro players call it "the best format in **Magic**."

As I did for years, before I began writing for this site, I'm encouraging my fellow casual players to go to the next prerelease. But this time, there's a completely new reason: in addition to the normal sealed event and all those drafts going on the side, *team sealed* will be there.*

WHAT IS TEAM SEALED?

If you don't know by now from reading my column or other enthusiastic Internet articles, team sealed means you bring three players. You sign up as a team, using your DCI numbers. (If you don't have a DCI number, you can get one at the event, in about thirty seconds. Very easy.) The event starts with your team getting a boatload of cards – two big sealed packs and four regular booster packs.



Together, the three of you bust open all these cards and spread them out, using whatever method of organization you want. (Depending on the tournament organizer, you might do this twice – once for a card pool you register, and then again for a card pool you actually play. This discourages cheating.) From whatever piles you make, you build three decks, one for each team member.

Once every team has built their three decks, the playing begins. As a team, you'll sit on one side of a table, and the other team will face you. You'll have letters assigned – A, B, and C player. A plays A, B plays B, and C plays C. (Pay attention, dammit.)

Each player plays best two out of three. The team that has at least two players win their matches, wins the team match. So as you can see, you can have one bad or unlucky match, and your team can still pull through. This tends to even out the role luck plays, which is always nice.

Tournaments don't eliminate players or teams early – the point is to play, and you'll play. The Swiss system pairs players up with teams that have the same record, for as long as it takes to determine the very best. So depending on how many teams there are, you'll play somewhere between three and six team matches – but the point is, you'll play for as long as the event takes.

For detailed floor rules, go [here](#). But you don't need to remember all of that – the tournament organizer will walk you through everything, and you can always ask a judge if you get confused.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

There are at least five reasons why casual players should go to this next pre-release, now featuring team sealed format.

1) It's something you've never done before. Why did you first get into **Magic**? Was it to try something new, or was it so you could keep doing the same thing over and over?

Occasionally, I'll hear a comment from a casual reader who tells me they never go to tournaments because they "know [*X*, where *X* = *something bad*] will happen." I don't get this – why isn't *X* ever some hypothetical *good*? **Magic** is all about *X* being good – it looks cool, I bet I'll like it, I've never tried this before, etc. Most players still see it this way. For every one of those readers I just mentioned, I get three or four who have gone to a pre-release – and loved it.

I don't think I've ever heard from a player who tried a pre-release and won't ever do it again. I'm players like that are out there – and I tip my hat to them for trying something new. I'd also tell them that they may want to give it another whirl, to experience this team twist.

2) Experienced casual players will do well. Over time, I've found that casual players who understand what makes a pretty good card have developed a filter that novices don't have yet. At the same time, the set is new enough that any Pro-Tour quality players won't have had time to study all the nuances.

This all means an environment ready-built for creative, clever players – and casual players are very creative, and very clever.

3) You'll never get matched up against your friends. Sometimes, it's a bummer to go to an event and have to play against your friend right away. I mean, as cool as your friend may be, if you wanted to *do that* you could have stayed at home and saved a few bucks, right? But in a team event, you put your friends on your team – and you can play alongside them all day, and face off against different opponents and ideas.

Even if you don't have two friends who can go that day, you should head up there. There will be other people in the same situation, and the tournament organizer will help you find each other. Who knows? Maybe you'll make a new friend, even someone who can join your casual group.

4) Once you know how to do it, you'll want to do it again. This is a fun format that you can bring back into your casual group. With six players (or eight, or any even number), you just need to have enough product and enough time to do it all over again. If you're buying *Mirrodin* product in enough quantity anyway, it won't cost an extra cent.

You can even skip the new product part, and make your own packs from older cards. I honestly don't care. (Wizards cares; but they'll live.) The idea from casual players' perspective is the format.

5) You might just like tournaments. I certainly do, and I've scrubbed out with the best of them. All this "Spike" and "Johnny" and "Timmy" garbage gets reduced to nothing when you're actually at a **Magic** event. (For those curious, I test equally high on all three aspects.) We're each individuals, with individual ideas and likes – but **Magic** brings so many of us together, with each release, at an event where you can *know* that whether you know anyone else there or not, you'll find others who love **Magic**, and there are games on.

I have only one reservation about this format. For the past couple of years, as I've gotten set spoilers far in advance of the set's release, the DCI has needed to ban me from playing in sanctioned events for one month after a set's release. It's a fairness issue, which I understand (though as I've told them, I'm not good enough for the advance knowledge to really make a difference!). My one consolation during this time has been that I can still go to each prerelease as a judge, and then participate in the informal (and unsanctioned) team sealed event that caps the day.



Each three-player team will receive two tournament packs and four boosters of Mirrodin product from which to construct three 40-card decks.

Now that the event is sanctioned, I'm afraid I'll have to give that up. But I'll still judge the event (look for me in Minneapolis, and feel free to come up and say hello). I expect there will be plenty of players and teams there to take my place!

*: Three-man team sealed flights are scheduled to be run at all North American *Mirrodin* prerelease events. The only way to be certain, however, is to check with your local tournament organizer. ([back](#))

You may reach Anthony at seriousfun@wizards.com. Unfortunately, he cannot give deck help to readers, even if you and your two friends email him as a team.