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October 31, 2003



Q: "Don't get me wrong, I like the change, but don't you think that reprinting **Yotian Soldier** with creature type Soldier was a mistake? I'm a regular player who owns the old version, and not all my opponents are fully up to date. How am I supposed to convince them that it is a Soldier, even though the card doesn't say so? (Hey, a card that is something it doesn't say it is? Yeah right.)"
--Stefan Vermeulen

A: From **Worth Wollpert**, Research & Development:
"The reason we changed it was mostly because of the name. Since it was a reprinted card, obviously we couldn't change the name, and the average **Magic** player would see the card and expect the word 'Soldier' in the type line. Since we thought changing it to Soldier would make more people happy than the small level of confusion would make them upset, we went ahead with the change.

"To address the second part of your question, the easy answer is that you can do what some of us in R&D do when you're trying to get people to agree with you, and that's to simply keep raising your voice until your adversary caves from the decibel level. Or you can try the slightly less easy way of getting on the web and checking out the [Oracle](#). This is where you can find (and prove) up to date rulings and card changes for all of your soon-to-be apologizing friends. If all that fails, you can always email Wizards customer service at custserv@wizards.com."

October 30, 2003



Q: "When you make a new set, do you ever worry that the public will not like it? Examples would be *Homelands*, *Legions*, or *Fallen Empires*. Some just don't like any of the cards. A better comparison I guess would be; if you make a batch of cookies: Are you worried about what the people eating them will think? Do you just make them and if they are bad you say, 'Oh well, I still did my job.' Or if they are good do you say, 'I am happy I just pleased a million or so people!'"
--Brandon Moore, Council Bluffs, IA

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, R&D senior designer:
"As a designer, do I care what people think? Absolutely! When push comes to shove, my job is to make the players happy. If I don't make you happy, I haven't done my job. Be aware, that I don't expect every player to like every card as different cards are designed for different types of players and, of course, bad cards are unavoidable, but I do want to create sets that players enjoy. When one of my sets comes out I seek out just about every comment on the set that I can find. I read articles, I check my email, I search message boards. (I actually check on all sets, but I'm more thorough on sets I've designed.) I want to know what all of you think because I want to know if you like what I've created. So yes, I take great pride in how my work is perceived."

October 29, 2003



Q: "How come, in the 10 years that **Magic** has been around, a colorless instant or sorcery has never been printed? It has already been established, through lands and morph creatures, that just because something is colorless it isn't necessarily an artifact. I've thought of some pretty cool colorless instants and sorceries and I would like to see it happen. It would really expand the possibilities for the game."

--Henry Phillips, Little Rock, AR

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

"This is an issue that comes up from time to time in R&D. A few designers have had the same thought as you, and colorless instant and sorcery spells have been submitted over the years. They've been rejected over the years as well. You touched on one of the reasons they've never been printed, and that's the ambiguity over what card type they'd be: an instant, because it behaves like an instant, or an artifact, because it only has colorless mana in its cost? Some bizarre combo type like 'artifact instant'? A consensus has never been reached.

"Another reason they've never appeared is a clear disagreement with your last statement. I, for one, am not at all certain that colorless instants and sorceries would significantly expand the game. We get into one of the tricky aspects of artifact design here, which is that a colorless spell shouldn't do anything better than the worst color at that ability. For example, a colorless burn spell or a colorless discard spell can't be costed too cheaply, because then green has easy access to weapons it shouldn't. But if they're too expensive, they'd never see play. I'm sure there's a balancing point in there somewhere, but it hasn't been located quite yet.

"Wait a sec, though . . . *Mirrodin* already has what you're looking for. Knowing that *Mirrodin* was the artifact set, designers did create and test colorless instant and sorcery spells. They were eventually removed from the file, but some remnants remain. *Needlebug*, *Leonin Bladetrapp*, and both the *Scale* and *Tooth of Chiss-Goria* are artifacts that you can play 'any time you could play an instant.' This compromise gives these few artifacts the feel and surprise value of instants."

October 28, 2003



Q: "The artificers in the **Magic** universe must have very few design models. Everything seems to be a sphere. From the *Mirari* to *Sphere of Resistance* to the return of *Icy Manipulator*, so many artifacts are round. How does a ball have any effect on the outside world? Is there any particular reason for this overabundance of metallic orbs?"

--Geoffrey Rutherford (aka Pharmalade), Bethesda, MD

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

"Uh . . . yeah, there are too many spherical things in the *Mirrodin* set. That's my fault. I'm the one who 'concepts' cards; I look at each card's mechanic and decide what it represents in a the fantasy setting we've created. Concepting cards for *Mirrodin* was pretty tough because there were so many artifacts to concept, and because the setting was so different from anything we'd done before. By the time I realized there were too many orbs and orb-like things in the set, it was too late—the art had already been commissioned. I made an effort to introduce a little more variety when I concepted the cards for the *Darksteel* and *Fifth Dawn* sets."

October 27, 2003



Q: "Have you considered printing equipment that is a specific color? I think that restricting equipment to just artifacts would hamper the ability to add flavor to the new type."

--Ben Kirzhner, East Williston, NY

A: From **Mike Elliott**, **Magic** senior designer:

"One of the big things that started the whole artifact equipment drive was a complaint by several people that enchantments representing physical objects did not seem very flavorful. We had to consciously avoid naming things 'swords' or 'shields' or any other physical object because it didn't really fit the flavor of an enchantment. We would constantly be bending this rule and justifying it as being a 'magical' summoned weapon and not a real object, but it still made a lot of people internally unhappy about the flavor.

"Tyler Bielman and Mark Rosewater put together several proposals on how to define the flavor of artifacts versus enchantments. One of the points was that objects were physical and could be used by anyone, whereas enchantments required the use of a specific color of magic. While none of the proposals were officially implemented, a good portion of the doctrine was applied during *Mirrodin* development. As a result, we attempted to flavor the artifact equipment as physical objects that you could pick up and hold, and that generally anyone could theoretically use, although some colors would actually not get a benefit directly from it, but might still want to play it for some effect like a bonus when equipment is played or a comes-into-play artifact effect. Putting a color restriction in the mana cost would violate the theory that any deck should be able to play an artifact, not to mention the weirdness over what the card would actually look like. If we did effects that we wanted in a color that resembled artifact equipment, we would probably go along the lines of the **Rancor**-style enchantments and theme them as colored enchantments with some persistent effect. So for now, expect to see stuff clearly designed to be used by one color in artifact, but not any colored artifacts."

October 24, 2003



Q: "A [recent article](#) by Mark Rosewater stated that *Mirrodin* is the first official 'artifact block'. If so, then what is the Urza's block considered to be? After all, Urza was a master artificer and that block contained many, many useful artifacts."

--Al Gritzmacher, Lockport, New York

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

"*Urza's Saga* was not designed to be an artifact block. If you look closely at the design, you'll notice that it was actually an enchantment themed block. How did this happen? The idea to make the set about Urza happened well into design past the point where we could change the set's focus. In fact, when R&D was told it was going to be about Urza, we said, 'You know this isn't going to be an artifact heavy block, which is what people are going to expect.'

"So why do some people think of it as an artifact block? 1) The book department dubbed the block the 'Artifacts Block' to tie into the Urza storyline. and 2) Thanks to a number of broken artifact and artifact related cards, the artifact theme showed up in the tournament play in a higher percentage than we expected.

"But R&D does not consider it to be an artifact themed block as it neither has an abnormally high number of artifacts nor is it thematically centered on artifacts. One only needs to compare it to *Mirrodin* to see the difference."

October 23, 2003



Q: "I was looking at [that intro](#) to the website, where it highlights three different types of cards for new players, and I saw you chose a **Thorn Elemental**, a **Soul Feast**, and a **Wall of Spears**. Now, I understand that you don't want to give a really good card there, as new players might not realize the potential of a **Mongrel** or a **Tog**, but **Wall of Spears**? And if you're going for simple, you could have done better than **Wall of Spears** with all of its undecipherable first strike jargon. Was it at all an art-based inclusion?"

--Connor Oakes, La Canada, CA

A: From **Dan Stahl**, Managing Web Producer:

"When the marketing team selects cards for their campaigns, great care is taken in selecting cards that will represent the brand accurately.

"The first step in this process actually begins with the selection of 'marketing approved' cards. These are cards that represent **Magic** both visually, as well as in attitude and complexity. The site you mentioned also had a restriction in that it could only use marketing approved *Eighth Edition* cards as the campaign was directly tied to the release of this Core Set.

"From there, it was up to the marketing team to select a card that would represent the three play types of the campaign. **Wall of Spears** was a marketing approved card that represented the player who wants to start playing for the fame in that that card represented advanced concepts (such as first strike).

"Keep in mind that this site is designed for the players who may have never heard of **Magic** before. **Wall of Spears** may seem basic to you, but to a new player, it has a bit more depth."

October 22, 2003



Q: "Why are there un-magicky critters in **Magic**? (Such as squirrels, dogs, cats, bears and elephants.) We believe that they have no place whatsoever in **Magic**. Why did you print them?"

--A couple of concerned hillbillies

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

"Good question, hillbillies. I can't stand having regular ol' animals in **Magic**, and neither can Jeremy Cranford, the **Magic** art director. We're doing our best to get rid of them. But there's a lot of history working against us. Even though Wizards has printed only ten Bear cards over the years, we've reprinted **Grizzly Bears** so many times that lots of players call any 2/2 creature 'a bear.' I hope this will become a distant memory as we slowly weed out the mundane animals and replace them with cooler monsters."

October 21, 2003



Q: "Why has **Frantic Search** been banned in Extended, and **Careful Study** has not? Ok, you can pay the Search for free, but first you have to have three mana (while the Study can be played on your first turn), and secondary you also risk it being countered and finding yourself with three lands tapped (instead of one)! Are all these 'drawbacks' (or, at least, 'differences' with the Study) so irrelevant in front of the possibility of playing the Search for free?"

--Michele Tocchet, Pisa, Italy

A: From **Matt Place**, Research & Development:

"While **Careful Study** and **Frantic Search** may appear to have similar effects, they are actually very different cards. With the right deck **Frantic Search** becomes better than free, actually making mana when it is played. In the past **Frantic Search** has been used with **Tolarian Academy** and **High Tide** to generate insane amounts of mana. At the **Magic World Championships** this year players used **Frantic Search** with cards like **Sapphire Medallion** and **Serra's Sanctum** as a mana engine. In the **Mind's Desire** deck it was possible to win the game on turn two using that extra mana. These factors led to our decision to ban **Frantic Search** in Extended."

October 20, 2003



Q: "With the new Locus land type for the card **Cloudpost** rewarding the more Loci in play, are you planning on making more of this land type?"

--Peter Kern, Media, PA

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

"I won't say never, but more loci would be frighteningly powerful. With only four copies available to play, it's a challenge to get three or four of them out. But the ability to make 9 or 16 mana is a good reward for the challenge. If you could play 8 or 12 of these things in a deck you could get to 9, 16, or 25 mana quite easily. If that were the case, any new loci would need a balancing drawback so severe that you would never play them in any deck except the abusive one. That would make them annoying to casual players and only interesting to serious players if the abusive deck could win tournaments. These facts start to make multiple Loci look inherently broken. Inherently broken is a term we use to describe card mechanics that are too weak in most situations but overwhelmingly powerful in a certain combination. Think **Tolarian Academy**, **Memory Jar**, and **Donate**. When that happens, nobody's happy.

"So to answer your question: it's within the realm of possibility, but there are serious problems to overcome. So don't hold your breath."

October 17, 2003



Q: "Yesterday I went into my local gaming store and I bought a pack of **Mirrodin**. I was surprised to find out that the pack was already opened and my foil rare had ridges cut into it at the top! Is there any way I can get it replaced?"

--Peter Klintstiver, New Albany, Indiana, USA

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

"While our quality control system is very good, do to the sheer number of cards printed, the occasional mishap gets out to the public. In your instance, the rare card was not fully inside the pack when the crimper closed the booster, so it got the ridged

treatment usually reserved for the edges of the pack. Your pack was open because the foil didn't get to fuse together due to the card getting in the way. This type of misprint is often referred to as 'pack crimped.'

"As with all misprints, you can send them in to customer service for a replacement, but you may not want to. While to most people the card is unplayable and therefore worthless, there are many people who actually go out of their way to collect such oddities. To the right person, it could be worth quite a bit, especially if its a particularly good rare."

October 16, 2003



Q: "Why did you print **Consume Spirit** instead of reprinting **Drain Life**?"
--Mike Leftwich, Parma, OH

A: From **Aaron Forsythe**, Research & Development:

"While **Drain Life** is one of the more famous black spells from **Magic**'s early days, it has a weird clause on it that makes the wording less clean than we'd like.

"**Drain Life**'s Oracle text reads: 'Spend only black mana on X. Drain Life deals X damage to target creature or player. You gain life equal to the damage dealt, but not more life than the player's life total before Drain Life dealt damage or the creature's toughness.'

"**Consume Spirit**'s Oracle text reads: 'Spend only black mana on X. Consume Spirit deals X damage to target creature or player. You gain X life.'

"That last extra bit on **Drain Life** makes the card both less aesthetically appealing and functionally worse. **Consume Spirit** is a nice, clean card that we wouldn't hesitate to reprint should the opportunity present itself. Simpler isn't always better, but it is in this case."

October 15, 2003



Q: "How do you determine when the time is right to introduce **Magic** in a new language? Do you anticipate the day when players in Russia can buy cards in Russian or players in India could use Hindi or Bengali cards in a tournament?"
--Matthew McKenzie, New York, NY

A: From **Wendy Wallace**, product manager:

"Great question Matthew! Not too surprising, localizing into new languages is largely based on whether or not the financial analysis supports it. Related to that is the simple question: does a market currently have enough interest in **Magic** to localize or, in some cases, do we think that by supplying local language product it would drive that interest? While adding a new language does take time, it's definitely something we are prepared to do when those opportunities present themselves. One thing we do to judge interest in new languages is to provide localized rulebooks, for instance PDFs are currently available of the *Eighth Edition* rulebook in Dutch, Finnish, Greek, Polish, Russian and Swedish. So will the future bring new languages for **Magic**? It's probably only a matter of time."

October 14, 2003



Q: "Has Wizards ever considered a major Pro Tour or Grand Prix level 'Vintage' event? We Type 1 and 1.5 players are starting to get lonely out here all by ourselves."
--Ryan Mirchel, Vancouver, Washington

A: From **Chris Galvin**, VP of Organized Play:

"Hi, Ryan. The short answer is no, we've never seriously considered a Type 1 format Pro Tour or Grand Prix.

"The next obvious question is fair: Why not? Where's the love, man?"

"Instead of falling into that trap, let me explain why we use the formats that we do for the Pro Tour.

"We want to accomplish a lot of things with the Pro Tour. In order to 'make the cut,' a proposed format rotation would have to pass all these tests.

- A roughly even balance between constructed and limited formats

- Interesting and skill-testing
- Reasonably accessible to all players everywhere the DCI runs tournaments
- Within budget constraints for the DCI

"That last point pretty much explains why we don't simply run a PT for every format, but I figured it bears mentioning even though it's common sense.

"A format rotation that included Type 1 would run in to problems on all of these fronts. In order to maintain the constructed/limited balance, we'd have to force out either Extended or Block Constructed. While Type 1 fans will point out the format is in fact interesting and features a large number of different decks, it is the case that the types of decks turn over pretty slowly. From our perspective, slow change is less interesting than relatively rapid change. Most importantly, Type 1 has always and will presumably always prominently feature the Power Nine and certain power cards from very early sets, like *Mana Drain*. This puts the format out of the price range of many players. Also related to this, these early cards were never produced in a language other than English. The packs that contained them were never widely sold outside the US and Canada. Sure, hardcore players everywhere in the world know what a *Mox* is. But there are most definitely international access issues to the cards themselves.

"The relative number of sanctioned Type 1 tournaments compared to Standard and Extended tournaments definitely bears out the limited access problem.

"(If you want to call me on why there's no Standard Pro Tour, I already answered that one in a [previous Ask Wizards](#).)

"Having explained why the Pro Tour is what it is, I'll point out that we do maintain the Type 1 format in terms of updating ratings as well as banned and restricted lists. Also, we run the Type 1 Championship as an open tournament at a major convention every summer. The prizes aren't big checks, but I think they're pretty cool. This year, Carl Winter won a piece of customized art. We commissioned Chris Rush to paint a reinterpretation of *Black Lotus* as the top prize."

October 13, 2003



Q: "I have always wondered what determines whether you use a comma or a colon when separating an activation cost with the resulting ability. An example would be 'sacrifice this, to do that' or 'pay this: to do that.' Any clarification would be appreciated."

--Chris Davison, Ohio State University

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

"Every activated ability has a colon (:) separating its cost from its effect, and colons aren't used in **Magic** rules text for anything other than activated abilities. The colon is the one punctuation mark that has a rules meaning in the **Magic** game. (Of course, activated abilities aren't the only abilities that can have costs associated with them, but more on that later.)

"**Arc-Slogger**, for example, has the activated ability 'Remove the top ten cards of your library from the game: Arc-Slogger deals 2 damage to target creature or player.' Everything before the colon is the cost – that's what you have to pay when you play the ability. (Costs are usually separated from each other by commas so that they're easier to read.) You can't play an ability unless you can pay its entire cost, and other players can't stop you from paying a cost. Once the cost of an ability is paid (and any targets and modes are chosen), the ability goes on the stack and waits to resolve. Everything after the colon is the effect – that's happens when the ability resolves."

October 10, 2003



Q: "A friend of mine claimed he purchased *Mirrodin* cards at a store long before the prerelease. How did this happen?"

--Doug Tompkins

A: From **Joe Hauck**, VP of Wizards-Owned TCG Brands:

"Some of you may be aware of reports that claimed a few retailers had received and were selling *Mirrodin* product well before the *Mirrodin* Prerelease tournaments. Those reports were true.

"We at Wizards of the Coast believe that one of the strengths of the **Magic: The Gathering** trading card game is the fact that it is a global product. As such, we make a

very large investment of time and resources to achieve a simultaneous launch of each new release into the 70+ markets that support sanctioned play of **Magic**. It was within this Herculean effort that a loophole was discovered and exploited by individuals for their own personal gain at the expense of all those hard-working individuals who support our efforts for global releases. Unfortunately, although the amount of product that was sold early was minimal, the impact on the perception of players, retailers and distributors was substantial. As a result, Wizards of the Coast is taking the following steps to change this perception:

"1. We have amended our internal logistical practices to close the aforementioned loophole in an effort to prevent this from happening to **Magic** or any of our other TCG's that we treat as global products.

"2. Our agents purchased *Mirrodin* product at several locations. These locations have been noted and we will ensure that Wizards of the Coast no longer provides to them the level of support that stores which adhere to our official street dates receive.

"3. We are looking through all of our legal options to determine what further action may be taken.

"I would like to apologize for any inconveniences and hard feelings created as a result of this incident. It is our intention and hope that through the above stated actions we will not only prevent this incident from happening again, but also discourage others from engaging in this type of activity in the future. The future of **Magic** depends on everyone having the same goal: creating product and services that provide consumers with optimal enjoyment."

October 9, 2003



Q: "I would like to know if you guys are planning on printing powerful land destruction (LD) spells for black? Because it seems that lately LD has been moving away from black - **Befoul** from *Seventh Edition* was not reprinted in *Eighth* or subbed in my another LD spell, only black LD in *Onslaught* Block was very conditional and slow **Earthblighter**, and *Mirrodin* has yet to produce any. Did black LD fell a victim to the color wheel, or is it making a comeback sometime soon? I, personally, would really love to see card of caliber of **Choking Sands** or **Rancid Earth**."
--Victor

A: From **Brian Schneider**, Research & Development:
"Black is a color that occasionally gets good land destruction spells... and it will, I assume, continue to get them periodically. Whether or not there's a good LD spell forthcoming, I can't say. But rest assured that black'll be getting land destruction spells in the future. It's still a part of what black 'does.'"

October 8, 2003



Q: "Why are web updates performed at 12:00 AM Eastern, when Wizards of the Coast is located in the Pacific time zone?"
--Liam Turner, British Columbia, Canada

A: From **Doug Beyer**, **Magic** web developer:
"Thanks Liam, that's a common question. While Wizards of the Coast's corporate offices are in Renton, Washington, on the U.S. West Coast, our web servers are actually on the East Coast, in Hasbro's Data Center in Rhode Island. We set up MagicTheGathering.com to update automatically at midnight *server* time, and the servers are set to Rhode Island time. That's why our site updates at midnight Eastern (and why we Pacific folks only have to stay up till 9 PM to see the new articles go up!)."

October 7, 2003



Q: "I saw proxy (fake) cards on eBay... Are these legal to sell?"
--Rick Olivares, Las Cruces, NM

A: From **Shelley McKinley**, Wizards legal department:
"Recently, copies of **Magic** cards have been appearing for sale on eBay, listed as 'proxies.' Wizards of the Coast owns the copyright and trademark rights to the **Magic: The Gathering** game. Copying **Magic** cards or offering copies for sale on eBay or elsewhere infringes our rights and violates federal and state laws. We regularly check

eBay and have infringing auctions removed. We also rely on tips from players alerting us to this activity. Please send any tips to custserv@wizards.com."

October 6, 2003



Q: "I just started playing **Magic** again after a break of a couple of years and am very much enjoying it. My question is about *The Duelist* magazine. What happened to it? I remember I always used to enjoy that magazine a lot, but I can't seem to find any information about it. Hope you can answer my question."

--Cornelis Alderlieste, Hendrik Ido Ambacht, The Netherlands

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

"*The Duelist* was a victim of the times. Magazines proved to be too slow a medium to capture the ever-changing metagame of **Magic**. As such, we retired it and moved the resources to another part of the company. The result (several years in the making) was *MagicTheGathering.com* which I feel is the modern day *Duelist*, filling the same role as the magazine but in a faster and more interactive way than the *The Duelist* ever could."

October 3, 2003



Q: "Why does the thickness of *Eighth Edition* cards seem so much less than previous expansions? Was the card construction process changed with the layout and foiling process?"

--Andrew Mertes, Holyoke, Massachusetts, USA

A: From **Mike Elliott**, R&D senior designer:

"The thickness is identical to previous expansions and nothing in the process that would affect the cards has been altered."

October 2, 2003



Q: "Now that we've gotten a chance to see some about the *Mirrodin* block, I have to ask: Did the decision to change the color of artifacts to silver have anything to do with *Mirrodin* (the first expansion to feature the new borders) being the start of an artifact block?"

--Nicholas Tower, Golden CO

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

"No, not really. The card face redesign process was already going on before we decided that 'Bacon' should be an artifact block. When we made that decision about Bacon there were some conversations about what we could do that would make it even more special, but they ended as soon as someone from the card face redesign team pointed out to the people working on Bacon that we were already planning something very new and exciting for artifacts. Basically, the timing of *Mirrodin* coinciding with the debut of the new artifact frames was a happy coincidence."

October 1, 2003



Q: "Will the *Odyssey* and *Onslaught* block stories be necessary in understanding the plot and story of (or catching minor allusions in) the *Mirrodin* novels?"

--Richard Jordan, Chesterfield, Virginia, USA

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

"No. There are ties to older stories for die-hard fans of the **Magic** novels, but you can read the *Mirrodin*-block novels without needing any prior **Magic** story knowledge."

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