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It's time for another mailbag column

Mark Rosewater · Making Magic
Monday, December 8, 2003

It's time for another mailbag column, where I answer some of the voluminous mail sent to me by all of you, my faithful readers. To justify my pun-laden title, all of the letters will appear in red. But enough of my babbling, let's hear some of you babble.

To start with, I thought I'd begin with a post that didn't show up in my mailbox but rather was posted on the thread to my last column.

Maro is vague to the point of meaningless.

Normally, I like reading Maro's articles. But this one is so bad that I've been dragged out of lurking to point it out. Just exactly what did he say?

It's not so much that Maro may be wrong, its that nothing that he says convinces me that he is right or that he's actually thought this out as much as he claims.

The problems begin with the title. I know what 'baby' and 'bathwater' mean in conjunction with each other, but I don't know what they mean in conjunction with this article. What is the baby that shouldn't be thrown out? What is the bathwater that needs disposing? If banding is indeed not coming back even in a 'fixed' form, then I do think that based even on Maro's article a case could be made that the baby was indeed thrown out with the bath water. Afterall, if Richard Garfield is in fact such an inspired designer (as I believe him to be, the American peer of a Klaus Tueber or a Reiner Knizia), shouldn't you have some pretty concrete, easy to see, and widely acknowledged reasons before making as bold of a claim as that one of his ideas just 'doesn't work'.

As far as I can tell, this wasn't an article about admitting past overreactions in preparation for Banding's triumphant return in a newer cleaner form. Rather, it was I think supposed to be justifying that banding was the bathwater. But if that is so, it does a very poor job of identifying why banding was so bad, whilest trample (which has undergone more drastic rule changes than virtually any other key worded ability, to the point of being utterly mystifying to player like myself who returned to the game after an absense of a few years) and protection (which has THREE rather than two distinctive abilities which can't fit in the reminder text) remain.

Celebrim

[NOTE: THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE POST. THE REST OF THE LENGTHY, BUT RATHER ACCURATE POST, CAN BE FOUND [HERE](#).]

Celebrim,

Let me start by saying that my article last week was not up to my usual standards (another one star when I rate my articles come the 200th week). It was banding week, I chose to talk about why we abandon game elements, and I fail to properly explain why R&D has chosen to permanently ban banding from the game. Second, I implied a theme to my column in my title ("The Baby and the Bathwater" is a riff on the expression "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater") and I didn't really explain that either. I was simply not up to snuff (I wrote the article over Thanksgiving break and quite honestly didn't put the time in I normally do) and you had the guts to call me on it. Kudos to you.

So, let me take a few paragraphs to explain what I should have last week. Why did banding go? Before I get into the specifics with banding, let step back to explain the bigger rationale. There is a threshold of information that an average player can handle. The easiest way to think of this is imagine that every week, we added a new keyword to **Magic**. And after a month, we stopped writing the reminder text on the card. How many weeks could you go before the game is too much to handle? Three months? Six months? A year? Two years? Five years? No matter who you are or how much information you can soak in at any one time, eventually, you won't be able to internally process all of the information. One week would be the straw that breaks your proverbial back.

R&D's job is to keep that from happening to the vast majority of the players. (I don't say all because I don't think the game should be at the mercy of the most mentally incompetent person who chooses to play.) As such, R&D has to pick and choose what mechanics to keep around at any one time. To do this, R&D has to look at each mechanic and weigh its pros against its cons. Does the baggage of the mechanic justify the benefit it creates?

With banding, the answer turned out to be no. As I explained in my flying column ("[Up, Up and Away](#)"), the early keyword mechanics were created to help keep creature stalemate in check. Banding, it turns out, actually helped make creature stalemates more than it prevented it. The reason? Defensive banding is simply stronger than offensive banding. Offensive banding is very situational and seldom allows a player to break through a stalemate. Defensive banding, on the other hand, is almost always useful and provides a great detractor to keep the opponent from attacking.

Besides not fulfilling its primary objective, it also did not prove to be very versatile. What do I mean? Let's take a look at protection, an ability that is equally confusing and complicated from a rules standpoint. Protection can be used defensively as a sideways counterspell to protect creatures; protection can create unblockability; protection can be used to destroy local enchantments; protection can be used as damage prevention; protection can grant untargetability. Protection has proved to be very flexible and effective. Banding proved to be much more narrow only ever affecting damage assignment in combat.

Most importantly, banding (the bathwater) could be separated from its key utility (the baby). The most important value of banding was its ability to give white its "strength in numbers" flavor. White's creatures are all about building a small army of guys that fight efficiently as a unit. It's important that an army of white creatures can take down a big creature without losing the entire squad. But white has numerous other mechanics that when put together allow the same aggregate effect. Between protection, damage prevention (especially with cards like **Samite Healer**), first strike, rangestrike (☞: CARDNAME deals N damage to target attacking or blocking creature"), assist (☞: Target creature gets +1/+1 until end of turn), gaseous form (moved from blue to white in the last color pie restructuring) and toughness pumping/regenerating others, white's army has its "strength in number" flavor.



In short, we got rid of banding because it did not provide enough unique elements to justify the rules confusion and stalemating it created. But in doing so, we were able to keep the essence of the reason behind the mechanic in the game. The bathwater went away, but we held on to the baby.

I hope that does a slightly better job of explaining what I should have said last week.

And now something completely different:

Hi, Maro! My name's Lyle. After the many times I've written to you, it still seems odd to be writing to a **Magic** card =) Anyway, when you were doing the YMTC2 card ideas, you said there were a few cards suggested that were either already in *Mirrodin* or were very close to or had incredible synergy with cards that were in *Mirrodin*. You said you would tell us, once *Mirrodin* was released, which cards these were. *Mirrodin* has been out since the beginning of October and I haven't forgotten about this. Which cards were these and which ideas were scrapped because of them? Thanx.

Lyle
Magic Veteran

Now that YMTC2's over, how bout some Tom Swifties?

Lyle,

I went back and found all the references (in my column "You Make the Card, Too") I made to a card being cut because of something in an upcoming set. Here they are:

Mechanic #12 - REJECTED
CENSORED

While discussing this card in the meeting, I realized that it was perfect for a design that was in progress. Everyone agreed that it made more sense to put the card in that set. When that set comes out, I'll tip you off on which card it was.

The set I'm talking about hasn't come out yet (So no, it's not *Mirrodin*). When it does, I will tell you the card.

Mechanic #20 - REJECTED
CENSORED

This card had two abilities that had a great tension with one another. Unfortunately, the two effects appeared on two different cards in *Mirrodin*. R&D decided that it was too soon to combine them on a single card.

The card tapped target untapped creature and put a +1/+1 counter on it. These two effects have a neat anti-synergy with each other. If I use to enlarge my guys, I have to tap my creature. And if I use it to tap my opponent's creatures, I make them bigger. The problem was the *Mirrodin* had two repeats (*Dragon Blood* and *Icy Manipulator*) that covered both effects. And remember that *Mirrodin* was locked (meaning we couldn't change any cards) by the time we discussed "You Make the Card #2" mechanics.

Mechanic #22 - REJECTED
CENSORED

This was another card that seemed perfect (with a major tweak) for another design. Once again, I'll let you know what the card is when it actually sees print.

This is the same set I'm referring to in Mechanic #12. Thus, it has still not come out yet.

Mechanic #27 - REJECTED
CENSORED

This card was killed for being too similar to a very cool card in *Tomato*. (We believed the existing card was neater than this card's execution.)

Tomato was the working name for *Fifth Dawn*. Obviously I can't tell you about any cards from that set yet but I can tell you that the card in question did make it through development and will appear in the set.

I'm sorry that I can't say more, but I will bring these cards up again when the time is right.

As far as the Tom Swifties, I will get them out. I keep working on them whenever I get spare time, but I still have three hundred or so e-mails to go.

Next up, "Making Magic" and *The Simpsons* ("Hmm, color pie."):

Greetings,

I read the colour pie articles, and I have but a tiny note to <http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=mtgcom/daily/mr84> (True Blue).
"And hey, it's important to have a Simpson represented in every color article."

But there wasn't a Simpson in
<http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=mtgcom/daily/mr43> (It's Not Easy Being Green)!

Could there be a green Simpson? In that case who? Bart is very selfish and promotes his own good, in my point of view making him the blackest Simpson, where Homer is driven by instinct and most certainly emotion, making him quite red.

Which lead me to:

What colour does/would Maggie represent the most?
Which Simpson is most green?

Sincerely,
Bo A.

I actually answered this column in my recap column ("[One Hundred and Counting](#)"), but I get this e-mail so often, I felt I should also answer it here. (I got the feeling that not everyone read my recap column all the way through.)

Who is the green Simpson? Why Maggie, of course. Maggie is very much a creature of instinct. She was born into her role and she embraces it without question. Why all the other Simpsons try to change their environment, it is Maggie who is happiest leaving it the way it is.

To recap my color weeks so far:

Maggie – green
Marge – white
Lisa – blue

That leaves black and red for Homer and Bart. Who's who? If for some reason you can't figure it out, you'll have to wait and see.

Speaking of which:

Mr. Rosewater.

I remember a while back that you started to do various color weeks at **Magicthegathering.com**. You started with Green Week, went into White Week, and stopped. This is quite frustrating as I enjoyed the past articles and was looking forward to Black Week. I thought to myself that you and the rest of the **Magicthegathering.com** staff will get to it sooner or later but it has been so long. What brought this up? Well, I just read a certain letter in your August 4th column and it began to bug me about the incomplete cycle. Please finish the cycle and bring Black Week into the fold.

Sincerely,
Luke Gerrard

P.S.: Yes, my last name is the same as the hero of the Weatherlight Saga.

Luke,

Yeah, our master plan hasn't worked out quite as smoothly as I had hoped. But I promise you that we will do all five weeks. Black Week and Red Week will be coming. Eventually.

Things have been a little chaotic as we've been searching for Aaron's replacement. (This is why, for example, the Card of the Days occasionally become Card of Two or Three Days.) While I can't tell you yet any names, I can say that we have hired the "new Aaron" and I'm quite excited. I think our new editor is going to be a great fit. Okay, okay, here's a hint. He's in the uncropped picture that's used on my column. As is a somewhat rare wild animal. I don't think anyone's going to be able to crack it from that info, but hey, I thought it was a cool piece of trivia.

And now, a short peek into what it's like to read my mail:

Ok Mark

I don't know what hiatus means, and frankly I don't care, but I want to see *Unglued II*. So here's what we are going to do. Everyday until *Unglued II* is printed, I will send you an email that simply says "Mark, please print *Unglued II*", and if I still



don't get satisfaction, I will begin to solicit other people to do likewise. Maybe not today, and maybe not to tomorrow, but eventually you will be receiving approximately 6 million emails daily asking you to print *Unglued II*. Do you really want that?

You know what to do.

Daniel
Western, Australia

Daniel,

For starters, let me congratulate you on doing a pretty decent job of following up on your, shall we say, "threat". Almost every day I get to check my mail and see a daily e-mail. (Although personally I wish you'd mix it up a little rather than always sending me the exact same letter.) There is just one small flaw to your logic that I felt a need to point out. I'm not sure bugging the one person on Earth who most wants *Unglued II* to see the light of day is going to further your cause. You see, I'm already motivated. Now, I'm tickled to see someone care enough about *Unglued II* to do what you're doing, but I don't think it's possible to make me want it to happen any more than I already do.

That said, keep the letters coming. This is one choir that doesn't mind being preached to. (And before I get e-mail on this, yes I ended the sentence with a preposition. I do that. I'm a grammar rebel.)

And now a slightly more serious letter:

Mark,
I really appreciate the 'color pie' as a basis for magic. I think it's a great idea. But how it's being applied by R+D is the problem. As far as I can see, you're not taking into account the existing cards in a particular color. As you shift what you think a color's ability should be, you're adding cards, but taking away nothing in the most popular format for magic players - casual. This, along with the power creep in magic in general (e.g. the increase in creature size per cost overall), is disproportionately hurting some colors over others. It is not apparent that you're taking this into account at all. I hope you'll address this in one of your articles.
-Michael Strauss, Ph.D.

Dear Dr. Michael, (seriously I am impressed that someone with a PhD is writing to me)

You have brought up a basic problem that exists with trading card games. Trading card games have two different forces that pull them in opposite directions. First, trading card games are about an ever-changing metagame. The reason **Magic** stays so fresh is that the strategies required to win keep shifting. In addition, the game creates an ongoing exploration that lets players constantly discover new aspects of the game.

On the other side is the problem of card glut. As a trading card game grows it keeps expanding the possibilities of what cards could do. This both raises the power curve of the game and blurs the definition of the flavor of the colors. The real problem is that trading card games by definition need to have the first part. If **Magic** sets kept coming out with only cards you've already seen or even simply variants of existing cards, the game would grow stagnant and it would lose its key strength.

This means we have to try and solve the card glut issue. The answer to this is the existence of formats. By creating natural ways for cards to leave the system as well as enter it, we insure that the power level (which interesting enough has stayed pretty constant over the last five years – although it is true that we've been shifting the creature curves to bring them in line with the other spells) and color pie stay in tact.

It's also important to note that cards do leave the system even in casual environments, but at a much slower rate. Changes we make now will slowly overtime seep down to even the lowest levels (although there will always be a die-hard "played since Alpha" group – but once again, this group constantly shrinks over time).

So to answer your letter, yes we are taking this into account. We do it this way because we have to for the overall health of the game. The effect on long-time casual groups is a minus but a necessary evil in the larger picture. My only suggestion if this is a problem with your play group is to start removing or restricting the number of cards from older sets.

Now let me segue to a mistake that is in fact a mistake:

Mr. Rosewater,

Reading the "[Equip of the Iceberg](#)" article of Sep. 8, 2003, I note that you state the designers of *Invasion* to be:

Bill Rose, Mike Elliot and yourself. Why do you not include Barry Reich?

Perhaps your definition of "designer" is different than what I am thinking of.

My understanding is that *Invasion* was originally known as "Spectral Chaos" and was actually born way back around 1993 as a concept by Barry who did a lot of the initial design of that set.

Would you please clarify?

Thanks,

Joel Riedesel

Joel,

I very much want to clarify. I was 100% in the wrong. Barry Reich was the fourth designer of *Invasion*. I simply forgot Barry's involvement because it didn't overlap with mine. Let me take a moment to set the record straight and give Barry his due.



Barry Reich is an old friend of Richard Garfield. In fact, Barry has a very important honor in **Magic** history. Barry was the very first person to play **Magic**. When Richard first created the game, he came to Barry to try it out. Anyway, cut to several years later. **Magic** is on the road to being published and all the playtesters know that they have something truly great on their hands. So, in different groups, they approach Richard about designing expansions for the game. (Or to be precise, new versions. One of Richard's original ideas was that **Magic** would simply change each year into a new game.)

One group of playtesters designed a set codenamed *Menagerie*. That set would later be released as *Mirage* and *Visions*. Another group designed a set codenamed *Ice Age*. That set would later... well, you know. The last set was designed by Barry and it was called *Spectral Chaos*. Barry's major theme – multi-color play.

When the *Invasion* team began their design we started with *Spectral Chaos*. While we made numerous changes to the set, many of Barry's designs made their way into the final set. The domain mechanic, for example, was nicknamed the "Barry" mechanic in design as a tribute to its designer – you got it, Barry Reich.

So, if you liked (or possibly loved) *Invasion*, Barry Reich deserves just as much credit as Bill, Mike and myself. My leaving him out was a sleight. Barry, I sincerely apologize. Hopefully, this response will act as an apology.

Now it's time for a little point/counterpoint:

Point (#1)

Mark,

I just wanted to write in and say that I thoroughly enjoyed "[One For All](#)", and would like nothing better than to see what else **Magic** D&D (Design & Development, though I suppose you guys COULD be considered Dungeons & Dragons) do to keep your minds sharp.

Thank you, and keep up the good work.

John Cataldo

Counterpoint (#1)

Good Morning Mark,

I look forward to reading what you have to say each Monday morning. I normally enjoy your articles. I did not enjoy today's article.

I have to admit, it was very creative. I made it through about half of the man land deck descriptions before giving up.

I look forward to reading something different next week.

- Dan

Point (#2)

Hi Mark, I would just like to say you did an excellent article this Monday. This is my first time emailing you about an article so you could say that you did a great job this time since I read them every Monday. It was a very funny read and I loved how you used such a small card like Welding Jar. I advise doing other articles like this one and your article I cc: Dead People. Showing the process of R&D from a perspective other than your own is great. Anyway, keep up the good work and I look forward to next week!

-Matt W.
Maryland

Counterpoint #2

October 19, 2003

Dear Diary,

Today I read an article written by a grown man in which a cardboard game piece was anthropomorphized into a little girl with a personality disorder and a notebook. It was very sad, and made me wonder just what audience the grown man thinks he's writing to.

As an aside, I also noticed that the other grown men and women who run the website upon which this article appeared have continued to leave the phrase "coming down the pipe" on the front page regardless of the fact that "pike" is the word that should appear in that phrase. This leads me to believe that sewage is a much more favorable image than, say, an expensive sports car to the goodly webmastering staff.

Regards,

----- The Psychotic Gnomes, Incorporated -----

One of the challenges in writing "Making **Magic**" is that my readers have very different likes and dislikes. My solution to this problem is that I try to continually shift the style of columns that I write. This way I hope to make everyone happy some of the time.

One of the joys of writing this column is getting the opportunity to hear from so many of you. While some of these letters are hard-hitting criticisms (and please, don't stop – it's important for me to hear what you don't like), others are very much "feel good" letters (it's also all right to say what you do like). So I thought I'd end today with a number of letters that have made me feel good:

Hi there Mark,

I realize that you get a good deal of mail, so I'll try to keep this brief. I organize **Magic the Gathering** tournaments at a Detroit area church as an outreach to younger kids in the area. Using Magic as a tool, we endeavor to offer positive role models in a friendly and reassuring environment. Our events focus on sending everybody away with prizes, and have as a primary focus, Good Sportsmanship. Over the past two years, the BIGtoe (as we've come to call it) has established a reputation amongst **Magic** players in Southeast Michigan.

We operate 8 week blocks that we call "Seasons", similar to Arena League. Each year, we take a vote to name the seasons. During the first year, the seasons were named for precious stones that represent the colors of the Seasons here in Michigan: Spring - Emerald, Summer - Ruby, Autumn - Amber, & Winter - Diamond.

During the (current) Second year, the choice of the players were "**Notable People of Magic**". The on-line nominations and voting took into account people that had had an impact on the game of **Magic**. Again, the people that were chosen had an association with the seasons: Spring (Green) - Wakefield, Summer (Hot) - Sligh, Autumn (Back to School) - Weissman, and Winter (Creation) - Rosewater.

And that brings me to the subject of my note... First to offer up any apologies. Secondly, as you in a way are the climax of our Second set of Seasons here in Oxford, I was hoping that you could pen a short note or e-mail that we could post

on our website and/or read at the events - I know that everybody would get a real charge out of the fact that you took a few minutes to send your greetings.

We do have a website that posts the results of each of the tournaments - additionally, we support an extremely active message board. The **Rosewater Season** kicks off just after the first of the coming year, and we'd be honored if you could be part of what we're doing.

Thank you for your time - I know that I speak for everybody in Oxford when I say thanks for the work that you and the rest of the WOTC Staff do in giving us all a game that we continue to enjoy.

Best regards,

Trisha Donaldson

Trisha,

Wow! This letter makes me feel good for a whole score of reasons. First, I love the fact that you're using **Magic** for such a great cause. Second, my own season? Aw, shucks.

I actually already wrote a short letter to you privately, but I was so touched I felt I had to include this letter in my mailbag.

Finally, props to anyone who can win in the Rosewater season with a deck using Maro.

Dear Gentlemen,

For some reason, especially on **Magic**-related sites, it has become far more common to criticize and complain than to compliment a job well done. Writing a weekly column is often an unrewarding, pain in the ass, but you all take the time away from other (likely far more enjoyable) activities or more important duties to continually create interesting content for us to read at www.mtg.com. While we might not say it often enough, I just wanted to thank you for a job well done. I always enjoy reading the site. I'm relatively certain there are many more just like me out there who don't bother to post in the forums threads following your articles, but enjoy them. So thank you and enjoy the rest of your morning/afternoon/evening (whichever is applicable when this is read).

I actually get a fair number of letters like this (although they are a mere thimble in my barrel of mail). And you know what? I enjoy every one. Every one!

For some reason I feel I can confide in you (This was the title of the e-mail)

Now that I've got that out of the way:

I was writing a letter to my friend who doesn't regularly check the internet. I realized, once I had sent it, that I was insane.

INSANE!

I love *Mirrodin*, I love it so much I want to marry it. Twice. I want to marry it twice.

But where did this love come from? How can I love something I so barely know?

Leaks and spoils, my friend, leaks and spoils...

I usually get a huge kick out of **magicthegathering.com**'s slow unveiling of the set building up to the point where I, with maniacal glee, peruse the spoiler and wish the pictures were in the same spot. The weeks of sweet anticipation, and it's slow sapping.

But today, I went to mtgnews.com. You know of mtgnews.com. I went and saw and wished for more. I love the new set. It makes me want to sing, like Dean Martin; WHEN THE MOON HITS YOUR EYES LIKE A BIG PIZZA-PIE THATS...AMORé...SOMETHING SOME SOMETHING SOME SOMETHING...etc. Except louder. And less in print.

Anyways, there is something wrong in this world and my brain. Today I went insane, there is no turning back. And tomorrow, I will be surely insane. Like alot. More so. I will read your article twice, then I will look at the preview card, pondering

hours on meaningless decks to break it, dreaming the other cards to use it's mechanic.

I only hope, my family doesn't notice until after the set is unveiled. This will be my first prerelease. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

-John Koziar

I've probably been more proud of *Mirrodin* than any set I've design since coming to Wizards (although *Unglued* is a close second). So I've been blown away by the players' responses to the set. This is why I love being a designer. There's nothing cooler to me than creating something that just makes other people happy.

Dear Mr. Rosewater,

My name is David, I am both a casual and tournament **Magic** player. I have been playing since junior high, and am starting my first year at college. I just wanted to thank you and all the people who make **Magic**. It is your amazing ideals that give magic its uniqueness. Its ever changing nature is what makes it better than it's rivals.

You may be asking what brought on such a spray of gratitude. Well, I was having a horrible day until I read your current article and after finishing it I was filled with a happiness that can only be compared to that of a little school girl. After taking time to read through all the preview articles, I can only say Thank You. You have given me something to think about and look forward to while trudging through my classes and homework. I can't wait for the prerelease.

Sincerely,
David Prairie

If these letters are too sweet for your taste, turn back now because there's more coming.

Dear Mr. Rosewater,

As You were the Lead Designer for *Mirrodin*, I suppose that You are the right person to address with this letter. By writing it I would like to say a great "Thank You" for creating Loxodon Peacekeeper.

Please let me explain. I always loved the idea of 2cc 4/4 creatures. Flesh Reaper and Veteran Brawlers are among my most-loved cards. Sadly, the rest of this "team" didn't quite grow to my expectations - I've always been thinking of building a deck based on such creatures, but I needed at least three quality guys, and all the other options were quite unappealing. Okk and Barrow Ghoul require a lot of additional investment and by this, they lose their aggressiveness (especially the goblin). You can, of course, say the same thing about Brawlers, but combined with cheap land destruction (mostly Raze and Tremble) they do their job most of the time. Imaginary Pet could be fun - but I really despise playing blue. So, when all hope seemed to be lost, in comes The Elephant! Of course its' drawback is troublesome, but in my opinion it's really not so bad in a proper deck (and combines with The Reaver Man :)).



I am sorry for bothering You with such stupidity, but I'm really grateful to You and the whole Design Team for doing such a great job and bringing one of the best sets in the whole history of The Game to life. If You don't mind, I'd kindly ask You to give a special "Thank You So Much" to the Wonderful Human Being responsible for The Peacekeeper. I would also like to say that I really find Your articles interesting and always look forward to reading them. Please excuse my poor english and once again Thank You a lot!

Yours sincerely,

Jim Muranty

I included this letter because I wanted you to get a sense of how I often get a letter praising me for something that I never expected to get praise over (not that I'm not proud of Loxodon Peacekeeper). One of the great joys of writing this column is getting mail from all sorts of players each with their own unique take on the game.

Dude, I was reading your article today about scary cards and then I led myself to 'bad cards' and found out about Okk, which I never knew existed. With the right enchant creatures or just Downhill Mountaincharge, I could just have a 1/1 goblin turn into a 5/1 or more until end of turn, easily letting a complex 4/4 Okk thrown right into battle. Of course, that was just an example and I'll probably find a better combo; but still, a 4/4 goblin for 1 is awesome and I think it shouldn't be underestimated. Thanks, Mark!

-Red Eye of the Wool

For some reason people don't seem to believe me when I say that Okk was designed for a certain style of player. They're out there. I swear. See?

Mr. Rosewater,

I have been a detractor of this website and of your policies in the past. However, over the year and a half that this site has been in effect and since you have began working at Wizards, I have enjoyed the game more than ever before. Columns like this one and the one you wrote regarding bad cards and the need for them, represents a great deal of progress. So this is a rare email. I admit that I have been wrong in voicing my sentiments in the past and praise that you are doing an excellent job.

Anthony Sculimbrene

Anthony,

I don't know how many of my readers know who you are (Anthony is a very vocal critic of Wizards of the Coast – and also a very good writer), but getting a letter like this is a real compliment. It takes a big man to write a letter like this. I have impressed you and now you have impressed me. I'd better stop here thought before it gets too sappy.

Dear Mark;

I would like to thank you for being a part of **Magic**. My name is Allen Reynolds, I live in Halifax N.S. Canada (that will be important in a second) and I have been and avid **Magic** Player since 4th edition, (although I took a break from local tournaments around the Urza block) I'm currently in my 3rd year of a Bachelor of Computer Science Degree at Dalhousie here in Halifax.

Anyway, the reason for this email, is the fact that our city was flattened by Hurricane Juan last week. By flattened I mean totally demolished. The whole city was without power for 4 days, and even now, almost 2 weeks later, I still have friends without power. I would like to say that **Magic** saved me and a group of friends from going insane. Throughout the week, amid trips back and forth to a residence building where I was doing first aid, (I got power back two days afterwards - I live next to a hospital) I had friends constantly coming over, for hot meals, showers, etc. We decided it would be a good idea to do a Rochester draft with *Eighth Edition*. So we went out and bought a box of *Eighth Edition* and the six of us sat down for a lovely afternoon/evening of **Magic** cards. This was before we knew the power was going to be gone for a week. Concurrently, we decided to draft three more times that week, one more time with *Eighth*, once with *Scourge*, and the final time with a Box of *Mirrodon*. (I also happily snatched up two Chrome Moxes in the *Mirrodon* draft - I figure that I've used up all my luck for the next year)

I would just like to extend my thanks from our small corner of the world. Without you guys and this fantastic game, this past week would have been the worst week ever. Kudos to you and to all that work at Wizards.

Allen Reynolds

Allen,

I was very touched by your letter. Sometimes I get so caught up in the day-to-day details of designing **Magic** that I lose focus of the big picture. It's a letter like this that reminds me why I do

what I do. Games have so much potential to do so much good in the world. I'm proud to be making my contribution.

And on that note, it's time to wrap up this lengthy column. I hope you've enjoyed peeking in my mailbag. Before I end today's column I need to make my normal mailbag plea. One of the major reasons I chose to do this column was to get a chance to connect more closely with the players.

While I cannot respond to every letter I get (I get a **lot** of letters) I do, I swear to god, read every single one. So, if you have any opinion about **Magic** either positively or negatively, here's your chance to have one of the big players behind the scenes see what you have to say. A single letter can make a difference. I am influenced by things I read and I in turn influence the game. If you care about **Magic** this is a golden opportunity to become part of the game. Write to me. Tell me what you like and don't like. Tell me how to make the game better (or possibly just how to keep it good). Take the opportunity to influence **Magic**.

As a quick aside, here are a few tips when you do write your letter.

1. **Make it short.** Too many good ideas get lost in lengthy letters.
2. **Make it clear.** Reread your letter and make sure that your point is clearly communicated. (This is probably the biggest problem I have with letters.)
3. **Provide solutions.** If you don't like something, tell how you would like to see it.
4. **Be nice.** Criticism doesn't have to be mean.

That's it for today. Join me next week when I dip my toe back into the oldest of formats.

Until then, may you make **Magic** a better game.

Mark Rosewater

Mark may be reached at makingmagic@wizards.com.

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