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# Introduction and GP Oakland

Alex Shvartsman  
Week In Review  
Thursday, February 12, 2004



## Welcome to Week In Review

Welcome to the new [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com) and also to my column, Week in Review! For readers that may not be familiar with the old *Sideboard.com* site, [Week In Review was a weekly column](#) to cover all the latest developments in the **Magic** community and tournament scene. Over the course of the last three years I've written over 100 installments. When I opened my own store Jeff Cunningham briefly took over the column but it was back in my hands toward the end of 2003, when *Sideboard.com* was retired in order to be merged into the site you are reading today.

## Magicthegathering.com Changes

**Magicthegathering.com** was originally conceived as a counterpart to *Sideboard.com* – a site specifically for the vast majority of the **Magic** community as opposed to just the hardcore tournament players. Pro player Aaron Forsythe was hired to run the site, but he recently moved to a position with Research & Development.

As Wizards of the Coast was looking to hire a new editor, they also planned to combine the three **Magic** content sites – **magicthegathering.com**, *Sideboard*, and *Magic Online* – into one site. To start off the new column I thought it might be fun to change things up a bit – Instead of just looking at this week in **Magic** I am also going to briefly review the new staff and columnists you will be seeing here on a weekly basis.

The man now in charge of the site is Scott Johns. A true Pro Tour veteran, Johns enjoyed success on the tournament circuit very early in its history. He fell off the radar for a few years, only to eventually return and re-establish himself on the tour as a co-founder of team Mogg Squad. Johns did a fair bit of writing and eventually ended up as Editor over at Mindripper and then Brainburst. About a year ago Johns left the game and his job over at Brainburst to pursue career goals outside of the game industry, but an opportunity to run **magicthegathering.com** has brought him back out of retirement. Scott has a tremendous amount of experience and understands the game better than almost anyone. He seems like a perfect fit for this position. Johns is also an experienced writer, and I hope that he will write an occasional feature article himself as well as oversee the other writers.

Speaking of writers, here is the weekly line-up:

## Monday

### Mark Rosewater – “Making Magic”

Mark Rosewater is well known to the **Magic** community as an unofficial public face of the R&D department. His love for the game is undeniable and combined with his showmanship, it makes Rosewater one interesting character. Some fun facts about Mark Rosewater include his creating the concept of a feature match, that he had a card named after him (Maro) and his continued tenure as the host of the Question Mark trivia show at Pro Tours. In “**Making Magic**” Mark shares some very cool insights into the mind and workings of the **Magic** Research & Development department. If you're at all interested in the evolutionary process of how a **Magic** card progresses from concept to print don't miss his column.



### Scott Wills – “Limited Information”

A British pro player, Scott Wills has been writing for a number of **Magic** strategy web sites over the years. His latest assignment is to pick up “Limited Information”, a new column inspired by a somewhat more narrow series previously written by Joe Crosby over at the *Sideboard*. Every week, Scott Wills will challenge his audience and a number of pro players to examine a draft pick or other Limited decision and make some difficult choices – than analyze the results. Scott's column is already generating great buzz from readers who were wishing for more coverage of Limited strategy.



## Tuesday

### Anthony Alongi – “Serious Fun”

Alongi got his start over at Star City, where he quickly rose to become one of the most popular casual **Magic** writers of all time, perhaps rivaling Jamie Wakefield himself. Alongi's column has been on **magicthegathering.com** since its launch and he will continue to examine casual formats and multiplayer **Magic** on a weekly basis with the new site.



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*Dissension*      *Guildpact*  
All Magic products


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**RULES**

Core Game  
Basic Rulebook  
Comprehensive Rules  
All Magic Rules



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[magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com)  
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**NOVELS**

*Dissension*  
Ravnica Cycle, Book III  
by Cory Herndon  
More fiction at *Inside Wizards*

### Dan Myers – “Inside Magic Online”

Dan's column is primarily a source of official information for *Magic Online*, with a focus on regular updates on the state of the game in terms of any ongoing or upcoming issues. Because Dan works for Wizards of the Coast he'll be writing from the perspective of an insider, so he'll be able to provide interesting stories and info from behind the scenes that you wouldn't be able to get anywhere else.



## Wednesday

### Adrian Sullivan – “Single Card Strategies”

Adrian Sullivan is known on the tournament circuit as an extremely innovative deck designer. So it is only fitting that Wizards would bring him on for a column tinkering with strategies and interesting uses for individual cards. I am not sure just which direction Adrian will take his column, but I am positive it is going to be interesting and entertaining.



### Brian David-Marshall – “Swimming With Sharks”

Brian David-Marshall is one of the original founders of Neutral Ground. Since he sold the store he's been doing a lot more writing – both as a regular columnist at [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com) and as a tournament coverage specialist for Wizards of the Coast. Designed with tournament players in mind, his new column covers the constantly changing strategies of the tournament scene and should be useful to a wide range of tournament players as well as those players considering getting more involved with tournament **Magic**.



## Thursday

### Mark Gottlieb – “House of Cards”

Gottlieb is another member of **Magic** R&D who is a regular MTG.com columnist. Gottlieb's column concentrates on casual and fun decks, a perfect balance to my own tournament oriented column.



### Alex Shvartsman – “Week In Review”

I've had a lot of fun and good fortune participating in every aspect of **Magic**. I've been a judge, a writer/reporter, web site editor, Pro player, tournament organizer and card dealer. My current top projects include running my store (Kings Games in Brooklyn NY) and working as Senior Editor of Mage magazine. This column will cover all the top **Magic** developments in brief.



## Friday

### Aaron Forsythe – “Latest Developments”

It is only fitting that [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com)'s original editor would remain involved as one of the weekly columnists. Aaron's column picks up where Randy Buehler left off, giving an insider's perspective on the process of evaluating, testing, and tweaking the **Magic** cards invented by the designers. Look for lots of exclusive content here as well as a fresh new perspective on just what it's like to work for **Magic** R&D.



### Nate Heiss – “Building on a Budget”

Nate Heiss is one of the original members of team CMU - one of the few CMU veterans to somehow escape being hired by Wizards full time. Heiss is bringing his column over from the *Magic Online* web site. He concentrates on building interesting decks without spending a fortune, and although his focus was originally meant for *Magic Online*, there is no reason those same decks can't benefit the old fashioned “real card” players, too.



## Saturday

### Rune Horvik – “Saturday School”

Norway's Rune Horvik is one of the more experienced **Magic** judges on the Pro circuit. He lends his knowledge to answering often times obscure or complex rules questions in his weekly column. This one is a must for aspiring rules gurus.



In addition to these 11 columns, every Monday we'll see a feature article on different subjects – not to mention all the event coverage from Grand Prix and Pro Tour tournaments around the world.

## Grand Prix Oakland

[This](#) was the first major tournament to feature *Darksteel*. For many players in attendance it was actually their first *Darksteel* tournament at all. A second U. S. Grand Prix in a row to be held in California, it comes on the heels of [Grand Prix: Anaheim](#). Anaheim's attendance was very low for a U.S. Grand Prix – partly due to its proximity to the season holidays and partly due to it being the last event in an Extended format before the new bannings had a chance at fixing the format.

Despite fears of another low attendance (West Coast events traditionally are under-attended compared to those held on East Coast and in MidWest), the tournament drew a healthy 450 players. *Mirrodin* Limited has been very popular with the players and this attendance is a sure sign that it remains so with inclusion of *Darksteel*.

The Top 8 for Oakland was full of high-profile players from around the country. Mike Turian led the charge, going undefeated on day 1 and maintaining the lead throughout day 2 to enter the single elimination rounds as first seed. Turian has led an accomplished career, most recently finishing in the Top 8 of [Pro Tour: Amsterdam](#). Unfortunately Turian will soon be leaving competitive **Magic**. His fiancé has accepted a position with Wizards of the Coast, which prevents him from playing in sanctioned tournaments (as per DCI policy) once they begin living together around May. Turian will be severely missed. I can only hope he will remain a part of the community writing about the game, or perhaps finding a job within Wizards of the Coast himself.



Mike Turian

Turian defeated Mitchell Tamblyn in the first round of top 8. Tamblyn is an up and coming player who has done amazingly well for his age. We are almost certain to see more of Tamblyn at the top of tournament standings later this year. In the semi-finals, Turian was defeated by another **Magic** staple, Dave Humpherys.



David Humpherys

One of the founding members of Your Move Games, Humpherys returned to his native San Diego after finishing graduate school. He continued to work with the team despite the challenges of long-distance testing and is definitely the most successful member of the team on the circuit this season. Humpherys recently accepted a full time job over at Upper Deck Entertainment, but as can be seen by this weekend's performance that has not diminished his ability to post amazing tournament results.

Another East Coast/YMG alumnus in the top 8 is Paul Rietzl. While Humpherys moved to California after graduating, Rietzl moved there to attend college. He finally earned his first career top 8 in Anaheim and with his performance in Oakland he now enjoys back to back top 8s. Hopefully this finish will give Rietzl the confidence and resources he needs to continue playing the game seriously. In the top 8, Rietzl was defeated by local hero Ian Spaulding. This is Spaulding's first top 8, an honor to Match Play – his local store which was also the organizer for this tournament.



Paul Rietzl

Another California native and also among the higher-profile players in the top 8 was Ben Rubin. One of the top money-earners in the game's lifetime, Rubin adds this tournament to his impressive series of accomplishments.

Last but not least is Ken Ho. Ho's career took off when he won Pro Tour: Osaka, but he has since fallen on hard times, falling off the gravy train in 2003. He was down but certainly not out – this Grand Prix win qualifies Ken for San Diego and provides him with an incentive to get back into serious competition.



Ken Ho, GP Oakland Champion

## Magic Trivia

Artwork of what Ice Age card is a self-portrait?

(Please do not e-mail me the answers. The correct answer will be posted in next week's column.)

## Good/Bad Play of the Week

A very popular feature of Week In Review has been Good and Bad Plays of the Week. This is where you, the reader, send us your best or funniest war stories. Once I've got them I'll pick the best entries and post them as part of the weekly column. Now that WIR has been re-launched, please send me your plays so this feature can be reinvigorated!

While you're at it, you can also e-mail me any **Magic** news, stories, tournament results, or anything else you think should appear in this column. You can contact me by sending an e-mail to [NOSPAMashv@kingsgames.com](mailto:NOSPAMashv@kingsgames.com). (Remove NOSPAM from the address before sending the e-mail.)



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