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Magic Invitational on the Horizon



Daniel Myers · Inside Magic Online
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Updates

As I posted to the message boards on Monday, there are some issues with both the “beta” prizes and leagues.

The issue with beta prizes is relatively minor: We don't know exactly which packs (by set) players won. We know who won prizes and how many packs each player should get. The team's been discussing how to handle the issue and should have a conclusion soon.

Also, even if the event or league you were in was “finished” artificially, we know what places everyone was in when they ended. Even though only one premier event ran all the way through, every event and league finished this way granted prizes to the participants.

The news about leagues is that the development team found some issues with how league information was being handled. They've done some rewriting on how data is threaded and that code is being tested.

This, unfortunately, has run us up against the **Magic** Invitational, which is taking place on *Magic Online* at E3. That means leagues have to wait until the new code has been thoroughly tested and all the Invitational work is done. That pushes leagues back past May 14, which is the end of the Invitational.

We promised leagues soon after the testing was done and I apologize for the continued delay. However, stability is still our primary concern. Given the choice between putting up possibly broken code and holding off for more testing, we'll pick the delay.

Magic Invitational

In the midst of dealing with code issues comes the **Magic** Invitational. The Invitational is an annual event where top players from the Pro Tour are invited to play against each other in many different—and usually wacky—formats. There's no money or Pro Tour points on the line. Instead, the players are competing to get a card that they submit added to a future **Magic** set with their face in the art.

While this is the eighth Invitational in **Magic** history, it's the second time it's been held on *Magic Online*. Back in the fall of 2002, we brought the players in to Wizards of the Coast in Seattle to compete online.

Putting the Invitational online allows for a much bigger crowd to participate than in past ones. Other Pro Tour events have huge numbers of players and side events to boot. The Invitational only has sixteen participants and a majority of the **Magic** community could only keep up by reading the coverage.

Even at the 2002 Invitational the only in-person viewers were the Wizards personnel. However, *Magic Online* allowed thousands of players to see what was happening in a whole new way.

While we can't have everyone crowding in watching the games, we do have live play-by-play via the chat interface. In addition, players can watch replays after the games finish. Evidently this was pretty popular given the amount of lag we had each time the first replay of a round was available.

Invitational At E3

Back in December, Randy announced we'd have the **Magic** Invitational at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles this year. Not only will players be able to watch via **Magic Online**, but there'll be a bunch of industry folks on hand as well. All the initial rounds will be at the expo and the finals will be at **Pro Tour San Diego**.

We'd already seen most of the problems with version 2.0 by that time and still wanted to show off **Magic Online** by having the event online again. After the last couple of months, there have been some doubts about still doing this. The team is only too aware of the possibility of having egg on our face if **Magic Online** goes down during the Invitational. So why are we still going through with it?

Part of it is simply that we'd made a lot of plans already to do the Invitational at E3. After gearing up to do this on **Magic Online** for months now, it's hard to switch gears. There's been a lot of discussion about taking it offline and doing it some other way. However, we crossed the line where that was possible some time ago.

It's certainly not news to anyone that **Magic Online** has had a lot of problems in the last eight months. It's usually just when things seem to be getting better that something kicks us in the teeth again. As I said before: one step forward often seems to be followed by two steps back. But we keep chugging away.

Looking at the other companies who'll be there showing off the latest and greatest in electronic gaming, it seems crazy to have **Magic Online** there. *Especially* when we're going to be pushing the system to its limits with the number of players likely to be online watching.

I guess I have to take back what I've been saying: Our number one priority isn't server stability—it's number two. Our top priority is making **Magic Online** work for our players. Most of the time, that *does* mean keeping the game up so you all can play.

Whether it was originally intended to be or not, holding this year's **Magic** Invitational online for the whole world to see is a statement. That statement is that Wizards of the Coast is going to stand behind **Magic Online**. The team's committed to making the game work. Why else would we have a long-term plan to rebuild it from the ground up?

Call it propaganda. Say I'm spin-doctoring and doublespeaking. But whether the Invitational goes off without a hitch or not (it didn't in 2002, either), the team will be there in front of the world to take our lumps as they come. We're just glad so many of you are still with us.

Thanks.

Dan



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