



MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

↕ [Related links](#)

➔ [Read other articles](#)

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search ▾ ➔

Adventures of Letter Man



Mark Rosewater · Making Magic
 Monday, June 28, 2004

One of the many perks of being a [magicthegathering.com](#) columnist is that I get a lot of mail. I list this as a perk because I believe my mail gives me a great sense of what it is that all of you want. In meetings, I often refer to my mailbox as “the barometer”. If there’s some issue that’s stuck in your collective craw, I’ll be able to tell from my mail.

As such, I like to visit my mailbox three or four times a year to let you glimpse at the type of mail I get and give me a chance to answer some of the more interesting questions I’ve received. Note that I’m listing not the most popular mail but rather the letters that I think will spawn interesting discussion or allow me to explain things I think a fair amount of you want to know.

But enough with non-Magic related items, let’s get to the letters:

Dear Mark Rosewater,
 During You Make the Card 2, you took an article and showed all of the outstanding mechanics that were to be used in actually making the card. A few of those mechanics were ‘Censored’ out because they were too similar to mechanics that were to be found in Tomato (Fifth Dawn), and you also promised to explain these mechanics during Fifth Dawn.



Me and my friend found this article and began to fight over what the mechanics might be. I claim they were similar to Scry, since its associated with DnD and one of your readers might have thought it up, but my friend stalwarty claims it was more along the lines of Sunburst.

Can you clarify this before we start to seriously fight (or stop playing Magic against each other).

Sincerely, a Constant Reader in wonder
 --Matthew Hawson

Matthew,

Here are the five cards from that article (“[You Make the Card Too](#)”) with censored mechanics:

**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 “design that was in progress” is *Unhinged*. At the time though, you all didn’t know of its existence, so I had to be coy about what set it was in. As it turns out this mechanic ended up not

making it into *Unhinged*. But it is on the short list for a potential third "Un" set and thus I don't want to reveal it. (Please don't use this to start rumors that there's already a third "Un" set planned. There isn't. We're still waiting to see what you all think of the second one.)

**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 in question was "M, T: Tap target creature: Put a +1/+1 counter on it." I thought the tension was very interesting, but *Mirrodin* already had *Icy Manipulator* and *Dragon Blood* (and at that point it was past the point where we could take them out of the set).

**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 it is when it actually sees print.

This mechanic did make it into *Unhinged*. Remind me when it comes out and I'll let you know what it is. (Is it interesting that an article from July 30, 2003 hinted at information that isn't public until November 20, 2004?)

**Mechanic #26 - REJECTED
CENSORED**

A number of us really liked this card until Paul pointed out how the rules kept it from working the way it was supposed to (and the way everyone would assume it worked). Robert Gutschera liked the card enough that he took it to use on the latest Vapor Ops test, a test we use on new hires to test their ability to develop **Magic** cards.

It's still on the Vapor Ops test, so I still can't release it. Once we stop using it on the Vapor Ops test, I'll fill you in. (Is it interesting that an article from July 30, 2003 hinted at information that isn't public until possibly years after November 20, 2004?)

**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.)

Finally, a card I can tell you about. Here's the original card: "M, T: Double the counters on target permanent." Obviously, the *Fifth Dawn* card this was similar to was *Solarion*. Wait a minute, you're thinking, how is *Solarion* "neater" than this card? Well, by neater I meant "in a manner that the rules team/development team would allow". Doubling *any* kind of counter proved to be, in R&D speak, "bah-roken".

In addition to the cards, I hinted at one other *Fifth Dawn* card:

#7 – Secret Mechanic X

One mechanic showed up so frequently I was shocked, for two reasons. First, it's an ability we've never done, so I was surprised to see it show up in such number. Second, that very ability (with a neat twist) was already on a card in the "Tomato" file. Remind me when *Tomato* comes out and I'll tell you which card it was.

Well, *Fifth Dawn* is out, so what was the super popular mechanic that everybody submitted? "Play all cards as instants." And the *Fifth Dawn* twist? There isn't one. Well, there was one at the time I wrote the column. (See my "[Head Games](#)" column for what the earlier version of *Vedalken Orrery* looked like.) The extra part was later taken out.

All the secrets haven't quite been revealed, but I'll keep doing mailbag columns and I'm sure they'll be readers like you Matthew to make sure I remember.

**Dear Mark Rosewater,
Regarding your article "Unhinged or No?":
You didn't announce anything on official prereleases! While stores will probably have Unhinged tourneys, you didn't announce any official tourney info. Seeing as Unhinged is a "no tournaments allowed" set, I was wonderings if someone would speak to management and get "unhinged only" tourneys or the likes.
--Basilisk**

Basilisk (or can I call you Thicket),

Is there any organized play being planned in conjunction with *Unhinged's* release? Absolutely. Here's what I can tell you. *Unhinged* will have release events similar to the ones run when *Eighth Edition* came out. This means the tournaments will be run at the local store level (the day after the release on Saturday, November 21) and will include a release card for the event. In addition, there will be a large release event run at GenCon SoCal (December 2-5) head judged by yours truly. And yes, I will be in costume. I can't tell you as what but I can say it will be of a new race introduced in *Unhinged*. Finally, there will be an Arena *Unhinged* kit to allow local stores to run *Unhinged* tournaments or league play. Hopefully, this will allow you to get your fill of *Unhinged* organized play.



**Dear Mark Rosewater,
Regarding your article "[Scry Me a River](#)":**

In the article you wrote, "Spike enjoys breaking the game down to its components to figure out what makes it tick. Of all the players, he has the most appreciation for game theory."

I totally disagree as a Johnny myself. In fact, I thought that you yourself were a Johnny, so it made me wonder what you thought of your own appreciation for game theory. Anyway, as I see it, I think you are right that Spikes enjoy gaining small advantages over time that lead to victory, but Johnnys enjoy winning in dramatic creative fashion. Spike may have the greatest knowledge of "competitive game theory" but Johnny has the greatest appreciation for "creative game theory". In my particular game circle I am the clear standout Johnny player, and I easily have the best appreciation for game theory, but I am not the greatest competitor, largely because I can't stand making obvious decks that win through small advantages. It is the Johnnys that create the best new cards (in my opinion) and who usually come up with the break through idea that gets a card broken in competitive play. We do things differently, but not worse.

--Patrick Korseck

Patrick,

The key to understanding the difference between the three player types is examining why they play. Spikes use the game as a means to prove their ability to excel at something. Johnnies, on the other hand, use the game as a means of creative expression. Spikes want to win. Johnnies want to do cool stuff.

Because "game theory" could mean many different things, let me define my terms. When I say "game theory" I'm talking about examining what makes the game tick. This means learning things like card advantage or time advantage. Now, Spikes want to win. In order to do this, they need to learn about anything that will give them a strategic advantage. Johnnies, in contrast, are searching for tools to let them be creative. What this means is that all spikes need to learn game theory while only a subsection of Johnnies do.

As an example, let's take the rules. The rules divide into two parts. The basic rules that every one needs to learn, and the advanced rules that the average player relies on the judges for. A true Spike is heavily encouraged to learn the advanced rules. Not learning all the rules puts him at a competitive disadvantage. Johnny, though, only needs to learn the advanced rules if he wants to build a creative deck built around a particular rule.

The comment in my column was just stating that of all the player types, Spikes are the most likely to be encouraged to learn game theory because it is mandatory to achieve their goal. Other player types, Johnnies in particular, might learn game theory but are as a group less inclined to do so. As far as the group that tends to pave the way for the most new tournament archetypes, I would have to give the nod to the Spike/Johnny hybrid. (Which is the player type I believe you are Patrick, at least based on what you've written here.)

Finally, I want to stress that you cannot compare Spike and Johnny as far as who is better. The two types have different goals. Spike is better at his goal and Johnny is better at his. Yes, Johnny's decks are worse competitively, but that's merely because winning at all costs is not what drives Johnny.

Mr. Rosewater-

Are there to be no more Magic: The Puzzlings? I haven't seen a puzzle for Darksteel in the Arcana (I did not buy the fat pack, local supply issues gummed that up), and there was no puzzle in the Mirrodin fat pack. I've always enjoyed the puzzles, even if the card situations are improbable, and the solution contorted. (Of course, I enjoy bridge puzzles, and I'm a Johnny.) I understand that the puzzles are difficult to create, quite time-consuming (and goodness knows you're a touch short on time with your three kids), but they are/were one of my favorite parts of a new set.

Thanks for listening, y'all do a great job providing an entertaining and thoughtful CCG, that both my wife & I enjoy. (We didn't meet via Magic, but she was willing to learn the game.)

Regards,
Dave Mescher

Dave,

Magic: the Puzzling holds a very dear spot in my heart. If not for the puzzles, I would not currently have the job I have now. I got my foot in the door at Wizards by suggesting the puzzle column for *The Duelist* (Wizards of the Coast's original magazine dedicated to **Magic**). The only reason I don't do puzzles more often is that there are very time intensive and between my promotion and my newborn twins, I don't have a lot of spare time these days. This isn't to say I'll never do any more puzzles (because I will), but not in the near future.

Dear Mark Rosewater,
Regarding your article "[Myr Myr, Off The Wall](#)":

Mistform Ultimus is a Myr too, and it doesn't have Myr in its name. :)
If I ever see you again (We met at PT Chicago) I'm totally going to ask you to sign my foil **Mistform Ultimus**. :)
--Todd Davis

Todd,

I'm glad you wrote in as you reminded me of something I wanted to say.

From this day forward, please assume "and **Mistform Ultimus**" is implied whenever I talk about creature types.

Thank you.

Dear Mark Rosewater, Regarding your article "[Gimme a Break](#)":

I could have done without all the gratuitous anecdotes. I don't read your article to learn about your college or your house, I read it to learn about Magic. It'd be great if you could keep your examples and anecdotes to those related to Magic. If you can't explain it with cards, then maybe it's not relevant.

--Juan Garcia

Juan,

When I first decided to write "Making **Magic**", I had a decision of what tone I wanted to use. I considered having a more distant technical style, but in the end decided that the column would be better if I took a warmer, more personal approach. Bringing in aspects of my life as a means to help explain things is part of choosing that path. I'm sorry if you don't like it, but that's the path I've chosen. This letter to the contrary, my mail overwhelmingly shows that the majority of my readers like this aspect of my column.

Hello, Mark

I have enjoyed your writing about Magic for many years, and I appreciate your immense contributions to the game. Learning a little about Bill Rose



was interesting as well - - he seems to be an unsung hero of Magic in that you don't read much about him.

Anyway, I was wondering what Richard Garfield is doing these days. Haven't heard much about him lately and I noticed you didn't mention Richard when you were discussing the design teams. He still involved?

Regards,
Tom Mitchell

Tom,

Richard still keeps his hand in **Magic**. He is currently on the design team for the 2006 large fall expansion, codenamed Control (followed by Alt and Delete). Also on the Control design team are Mike Elliott, Aaron Forsythe, Tyler Bielman, and myself (as team lead). Even when Richard isn't on a design team, he still pokes his head in R&D about once a week.

Dear Mark Rosewater,
About 4 or 5 weeks ago, you (graciously, I might add) clued your loyal readers in on a job opening in R&D. There was a caveat that the job would only be posted for three weeks and, true to word, it has since become unposted.

Obviously, I am one of the presumable multitude of applicants looking to somehow pry themselves through this slim door of opportunity into the promised land of Wizards R&D. Also, I am one of the presumable multitude who haven't heard a peep since applying.

As I've rambled on long enough, I should probably get to the point. Has a hire been made? As I've not heard anything yet, should I give up hope? Although I know my chances reside somewhere in the "Slim to None" category, I've never expected to get the job, but I still have the little nagging of hope at the back of my head. It's really driving me crazy. So, to make a long story boil down to the one line I already used in my subject line, "Any news on the Creative Writer position?"

--Jay Sutton

Jay,

Here's where things stand. We received over five hundred and fifty applications. (Incidentally, this is way above average for a job posting on our website.) We requested additional information from over four hundred of those. We're now working our way through the four hundred plus applications. Obviously, this is going to take some time.

Dear Mark Rosewater,
Regarding your article "Myr Myr, Off The Wall":

Although I found the concept interesting and feel that you presented it well, I found that I didn't end up taking much away from the article.

Possibly because of your focus on tying this format (or multi-format if you prefer), you did not give me enough information on any specific aspect of Magic or Myrs to be helpful.

I don't really have any better idea how to use Myrs in my deck, or to counter Myrs in other decks. I don't have any greater understanding of the R&D process concerning Myrs, or feel any sense of insight into Magic's inner sanctum.

I would suggest that in your future articles that you focus on one style and thus deliver a better article. You know the saying "Trying to do a little bit of everything will have you end up doing a lot of nothing."

Until I get to read your next article,
Blake
--Blake Goutier

Blake,

While it may seem as if I randomly change styles on a whim, I am actually very careful about what articles I write using what style. Having gone to communications school (Jay from the earlier question - you might want to skip ahead past the personal stuff), I learned an important

lesson from an influential man named Marshall McLuhan. A student of media, McLuhan came up with an important concept summed up by the catch-phrase "The medium is the message."

The idea behind McLuhan's concept is that the media itself shapes how a message is delivered. Television, for example, delivers a different kind of message from a magazine or a film or a book. McLuhan felt that communicators had to understand the medium they were using and use that knowledge to help craft their message.

In terms of "Making **Magic**", what this means is that I have to be very careful about what type of article I use. If I want to have a serious discussion, I need to have a very straight-laced column. If I'm trying to be whimsical, I need a lighter type of column. My message on Myr Week was, basically, there's not a lot to say on any one topic but there is a little to say on a lot of topics. So I chose a format that reflected that. I couldn't have just written that article in any one of the sub-styles because I didn't have enough to say for that kind of approach.

Did this end up making the column fluffy? Of course, but I believe that's the type of column the majority of my readers would expect from Myr Week.

Signing Off

That's all the time I have for today. I hope you enjoyed having another peek into my mailbag.

As always I want to stress that I read every letter sent to me. (Although due to the volume I cannot respond to everyone.) If you want to have your opinion heard, here's your chance. I have a significant impact on the game. And all of you have the ability to tell me what you're feeling about **Magic** any time you want. R&D constantly makes decisions based on what we feel the players want. But we can only make decisions based on information we have. If you like or dislike something about the game and want to see it change, or not change, let me know. This is the most important feature of my column - a chance for anyone who wants to have an impact on the game to actually have an impact. Don't let this opportunity go to waste.

Join me next week when I take a trip to the dark side.

Until then, may you take the time to tell me how you feel.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Mark Rosewater](#) archive

[WHAT'S NEW](#) [CORPORATE INFO](#) [WHERE TO BUY](#) [INTERNATIONAL](#) [SUPPORT](#) [SITEMAP](#) [PRODUCTS](#)

© 1995-2004 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.](#)
[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)