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July 30, 2004

Q: "The goblin **Squee**, from the *Weatherlight* saga, is called Goblin Nabob in the title of his card. What exactly is a nabob?"

--Steve
Cleveland, Ohio

A: From **Brandon Bozzi**, Magic R&D:

"Thanks for the question Steve.

"'Nabob,' according to the deluxe edition of *Merriam-Websters's Collegiate Dictionary*, is 'a provincial governor of the Mongol empire in India, or a person of great wealth and prominence.' Our definition is a combination of these, with the real-world reference dropped. So, why, you may ask, would Squee, cabin boy of the *Weatherlight*, get such a grandiose title? In Mercadia, goblins, or **kyren** as they are known there, are awarded high status. Squee, being a member of the goblin race, was given this high status as well during his stay on that plane. And, since his card was printed during *Mercadian Masques*, it was given a name to reflect Squee's newfound status."

July 29, 2004

Q: "I would like to know how many Atogs and Lhurgoyfs have been printed and what their names are?"

- Dorian

A: From **Elaine Chase**, Magic R&D:

"Here is the comprehensive list of Atogs and Lgurgofs (other than **Mistform Ultimius**) along with the first set each card appeared in:"

Atogs		Llurgoyfs	
Atog	<i>Antiquities</i>	Lhurgoyf	<i>Ice Age</i>
Foratog	<i>Mirage</i>	Cantivore	<i>Odyssey</i>
Auratog	<i>Tempest</i>	Cognivore	<i>Odyssey</i>
Chronatog	<i>Visions</i>	Mortivore	<i>Odyssey</i>
Necratog	<i>Weatherlight</i>	Magnivore	<i>Odyssey</i>
Phantatog	<i>Odyssey</i>	Terravore	<i>Odyssey</i>
Psychatog	<i>Odyssey</i>		
Sarcatog	<i>Odyssey</i>		
Lithatog	<i>Odyssey</i>		

Thaumatog *Odyssey*

Atogatog *Odyssey*

Megatog *Mirrodin*

July 28, 2004



Q: "I've noticed that Mike Dringenberg is credited with the art on the *Mirrodin Talismans*. Is this the same artist who did *Sandman* with Neil Gaiman, or somebody else?"

--Jim

A: From **Jeremy Cranford**, **Magic** Art Director:

"Yes, Michael Dringenberg co-created *Sandman* with Neil and Sam Kieth."

July 27, 2004



Q: "How does R&D decide which cards to put into the [Selecting Ninth Edition](#) votes? Did each card in a given runoff (e.g., *Emperor Crocodile* and *Jade Leech*) have strong supporters at Wizards, thereby requiring a player vote to break the tie?"

--Mark S.

A: From **Aaron Forysthe**, **Magic** R&D:

"Our inspiration for votes came from many different places. The two most common were when we wanted to put in more cards than would fit, and when we couldn't agree on what we thought players would enjoy.

"The *Blinding Angel* vs. *Dawn Elemental* vote is a good example of the first case. With limited space available for white fliers, and a certain five-mana 4/4 virtually guaranteed a spot, we didn't know which of the other two we wanted to include. So instead of making the choice ourselves, we decided to 'poll the audience.'

"The *Jade Leech* vs. *Emperor Crocodile* vote is an example of the second case. These votes usually came about when one member of the team would put forth a card to go in *Ninth*, like *Jade Leech*. 'Trust me,' they'd say, 'players like *Jade Leech*.' 'I don't think they do,' another team member would reply, and then arguments would ensue. To settle the arguments, we made votes pitting the card in question against what it would replace.

"This week's vote is also in the latter category. I'll admit that I was one of the people that believed players would like *Time Elemental*, as it was from *Legends*, the set that is the beneficiary of the most irrational praise in the history of the game. When I started **Magic**, *Time Elemental* was a revered card that filled my friends and I with jealousy and awe every time it was played against us. Does that nostalgia hold up today? That's what the vote is for, although I'd guess now that it doesn't."

July 26, 2004



Q: "I've heard a lot about the 'black summer' and the famous *Necropotence* decks. Could you explain how it worked (the deck and what cards did it have)?"

--Eric Utermohlen

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

A: From **Henry Stern**, **Magic** R&D:

"The first 'Necro' deck was played by Leon Lindback at Pro Tour #1 in New York, February 16-18 1996. His deck was based more around the *Drain Life* / *Soul Burn* - *Necropotence* interaction. Graham Patomer, who won the Juniors at that Pro Tour, was actually playing a Necro deck that was much more similar to what the definitive 'Necro' deck would become. The Necro decks over the summer varied a bit as the metagame shifted around them, but here are some of the cards that were in most Necro decks:"

The Engine

Necropotence - The card drawing engine of the deck

Creatures

Hypnotic Specter - Devastating if cast on turn 1 with a *Dark Ritual*

Black Knight / Pump Knights - Fast efficient creatures
Sengir Vampire / Ihsan's Shade - Most Necro decks used a couple of larger creatures

Spells

Hymn to Tourach - Super efficient hand destruction
Dark Ritual - 1st Turn Necro / Hyppie
Drain Life - More Life = more cards
Demonic Consultation - "It's like playing with 8 Necros"
Icequake - Some decks played with Icequakes to complement the Stripmines in the deck
Paralyze / Weakness - Some decks added pinpoint creature removal
Lightning Bolt - Some people splashed red to support direct damage

Artifacts

Nevinyrral's Disk - Great board control, sometimes useful for destroying your own Necro.
Black Vise - Another great 1st turn drop
Zuran Orb (restricted) - Very very good later in the game
Ivory Tower (restricted) - Another insane artifact, particularly in this deck.

Lands

Strip Mine - Every good deck of that time ran 4 **Strip Mines**
Mishra's Factory - frequently the target of the **Strip Mine**
Swamps - the deck needs a minimum 17-18 swamps in order to reliably cast Necro and Drains

July 23, 2004



Q: "In [Card of the Day 7/20/2004](#) you had **Mogg Fanatic** as your Card of the Day and stated that only **Mogg Fanatic** and **Blood Pet** made it into the set as a part of an original 5 card cycle that had 1 mana creatures with 'sac this card: do some neat stuff'. What were the other 3 cards?"

--Arelius
Reykjavik, Iceland

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Lead Designer:

"Arelius,

"The other three cards of the cycle (with a little tweaking) showed up in the Judgment expansion. They are:

- White - **Benevolent Bodyguard**
- Blue - **Hapless Researcher**
- Green - **Krosan Wayfarer**"

July 22, 2004



Q: "I'm curious if the artist gets the final name of a card before doing the artwork, or if the card is named after the art is completed."

--Robert
Minneapolis, MN, USA

A: From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** Creative Director:

"Robert, all the creative elements of a **Magic** card -- name, illustration, and flavor text -- are created during the same time period. Illustrators generally don't get a final card name unless the card is a reprint. They have to rely solely on the art description we write for the card concept."

July 21, 2004



Q: "This may seem like a ridiculous question, but...this has actually come up. Are Proposal, Splendid Genesis, and Fraternal Exaltation legal to play in Type 1 tournaments? While Proposal is impossible to obtain, both Splendid Genesis and Fraternal Exaltation can be purchased from some reputable warehouses. If they are legal, what is the Oracle text for Splendid Genesis and what happens if the third player wins a game in a tournament?"

-- Justin

A: From **Paul Sottosanti** , **Magic R&D:**

"Well, Justin, when I asked rules manager Paul Barclay if Splendid Genesis and Fraternal Exaltation had Oracle text, he responded with:

'No. They're not real cards.'

"While I think that's being a little harsh, it's true that the cards don't fit under the definition of being legal for Type 1, which says that 'Type 1 tournament decks may consist of cards from all **Magic** card sets, any extension of the basic set, and all promotional cards released by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.' These cards were never released by Wizards of the Coast and, for that matter, were never really intended to be seen by the public.

"For those of you who are a little lost right now, you can [read about these three cards here](#). Unfortunately, though, that's about all you can do with them, as they aren't legal in Type 1 tournaments.

"But if there's ever an Open unsanctioned tournament of any sort out here in Renton, I promise to show up just for the chance of seeing one of those cards played. Because really, who doesn't want to see Fraternal Exaltation resolve in a tournament setting? I just hope your parents live nearby..."

July 20, 2004



Q: "Why has there not been a Saturday School for the past two weeks? I thought it was supposed to come out every week?"

- Rodney

A: From **Scott Johns**, Content Manager, **magicthegathering.com**:

"Sorry for the confusion Rodney. We posted a note at the bottom of the [last Saturday School](#) but you're not the only one that missed it. For anyone that did miss it, Saturday School is currently undergoing some changes (including a new author) and is expected to be back sometime in August."

July 19, 2004



Q: "What determines the card number each card in a set gets (e.g. **Mephidross Vampire** is card number 53 out of 165 in the *Fifth Dawn* set)?"

--Martin

Porsgrunn, Telemark, Norway

A: From **Del Laugel**, **Magic** Technical Editor:


"When I assign collector numbers to a card set, I start by grouping the cards by color. All the white cards are together at the beginning, followed by blue, black, red, and green, and finally multicolored cards. (The 'WUBRG' color order is pretty standard. It mirrors the pentagon of colors on the back of every **Magic** card that puts 'friendly' colors together.) After the colored cards come artifacts, nonbasic lands, and basic lands. Then I alphabetize the cards within each of these nine groups by their English card names (a card has the same collector number in all languages). Once the cards are in order, I start at the beginning with 1 and number from there. The second number printed on the card is just the total number of cards in the set.

"If you use three-ring binders to store your **Magic** cards, collector numbers are a good way to stay organized. All your red *Mirrodin* cards, for example, will be in one place, and it's easy to see which cards you're missing. Many players don't keep basic land cards in binders, though, which is why basic lands are numbered separately from nonbasic lands and put at the very end.

"What if a card falls into multiple categories? Well, until the *Mirrodin* block introduced artifact lands, that wasn't possible. We decided to bundle the artifact lands with the other nonbasic lands for numbering since most players putting together Constructed decks would expect to find these cards in the land section of their binders."

July 16, 2004









Q: "How much difference does it make in a card when the cost has another colored mana instead of colorless? **Beacon of Destruction** has the mana cost of  while






Lava Axe has  but the **Beacon of Destruction** seems like a much better card."



--Brian

Princeton Jct, New Jersey, USA

A: From **Matt Place, Magic R&D:**

"The difference extra colored mana symbols make is dependant on how much total mana the spell costs. For example, changing a card that costs  to  is much more of a price increase than changing a card from  to . This is true for a few reasons. Let's say you are playing red/green and you draw a spell that costs  and another that costs  (along with two mountains and one forest). You obviously can't cast both spells by turn two since you need all three lands in play to cast both spells.

"In the case of  versus  it is mostly an issue in decks with three or more colors. Assuming you are using mostly basic lands, it is very difficult to be able to reliably have ,  and  available by the time you have five or six mana.

"Getting back to your specific example, in a mono or two color deck I agree with you, the  spell is much better. In a one or two color deck you rarely even notice the extra  in the casting cost and so you are getting a nearly free increase in card power by restricting yourself to just one or two colors to choose cards from."

July 15, 2004



Q: "I was wondering if you were going to do a novel for *Unhinged* like you do for the other expansions of **Magic**?"

--Warren, Goodyear, Arizona

A: From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic Creative Director:**

"Dear Warren,

"Very funny. Is this your way of asking for yet another extension? I don't think I need to remind you that we agreed on a rough-draft deadline of early April, which, by my calculations, means your manuscript is now 94 days late. Please don't make me regret giving you this unique opportunity.

"Sincerely,

"Brady Dommermuth
"Magic Creative Director"

July 14, 2004



Q: "With so many combos in the complete *Mirrodin* block, aren't you afraid that you'll spoil the interesting combat part of the game?"

- Geogroy, Arlon, Belgium

A: From **Mark Rosewater, Magic Lead Designer:**

"As long as the combo pieces aren't too fast, creatures will always play an important role. Creatures are the most cost efficient threat in **Magic**. They'll be used (although not necessarily in every deck) as long as R&D keeps the environment from getting degenerate. And as long as there are creatures, there's bound to be combat. In addition, many of *Mirrodin* block's combos involve creatures. So am I afraid that *Mirrodin* block will drive creatures out of the game? No, I am not."

July 13, 2004



Q: "Where did the term 'cantrip' come from?"

- Charles, Baltimore, Maryland

A: From **Devin Low, Magic R&D:**

"The word itself comes from a Scottish term for charm, magic trick, incantation or spell ... or so dictionary.com informs me. I believe the origin of the word's use in **Magic** comes from *Dungeons & Dragons*. When **Magic** first came out, it was marketed specifically to **D&D** players, because the fantasy iconography would appeal to them and because it would give them something quick and fun to do while waiting for a late player to arrive. With so many **D&D** players in early **Magic**, some **D&D** slang got into

the **Magic** lingo. In **Dungeons & Dragons** at the time, a 'cantrip' was a 'zero-level spell' that had a very minor effect and didn't count against the limit of, say, three first-level spells and two second-level spells that a wizard of a certain level was allowed per day. So basically, your wizard could only cast five spells a day, but the cantrips didn't count against this limit. You might have a separate limit on the cantrips you could cast per day, and you might not.

"In **Magic**, a cantrip refers to a spell that has a minor game effect with the text "Draw a card" added at the end so that it's worthwhile to put in your deck. Everyone is familiar with **Shatter**. **Smash** from *Apocalypse* is a cantrip version of **Shatter**. In **Magic** you also have limits on the number of spells you can cast, but cantrips 'don't count' against that limit because you get to draw a new card to replace the one you used on the cantrip."

July 12, 2004



Q: "Am I allowed to use an Italian **Arcbound Ravager** in tournaments in the US and if so are there any special requirements?"
--Alec, Norfolk VA

A: From **Elaine Chase, Magic R&D:**

"Short answer: Yes, you are allowed to use an Italian **Arcbound Ravager** in tournaments in the US and no, there aren't any special requirements.

"Longer answer: Every DCI sanctioned **Magic** tournament allows you to use **Magic** cards printed in any language. You do not need to have a translation handy. However, you are expected to know what your own cards do. You are not allowed to use the language difference to get away with playing a card wrong or to try and deceive your opponent in any way. If your opponent is playing with foreign language cards, you can ask a judge for the [Oracle](#) wording."

July 9, 2004



Q: "How do the **Verduran** and **Yavimaya Enchantress**'s abilities fit into the color wheel?"

A: From **Mark Rosewater, Magic** lead designer:

"Blue is the number one card drawing color. But it's not the only color to have card drawing. All colors, for example, have cantrips while black has the ability to trade life for cards. Green, it turns out, is the number two color when it comes to card drawing. The one limit put on the card is that all its card drawing has to be tied to creatures. This allows green to have cantrip creatures (**Wall of Blossoms**), creatures that draw cards when they damage an opponent (**Hystrodon**), card drawers that draw cards equal to the number of creatures (**Collective Unconscious**), cards that let you sacrifice creatures to draw cards (**Greater Good**), and yes, cards that let you draw cards when enchantments are played (the Enchantresses mentioned above).

"Why is this green? Because green is about growth and one of the ways to represent this mechanically is through card drawing (let's call it growth of the hand). Green's growth is also shown in many other ways be it power/toughness (**Maro, Lhurgoyf**), creatures (**Parallel Evolution, Squirrel Nest**), +1/+1 counters (**Decree of Savagery, Thrive**) land (**Natural Balance, Reap and Sow**), mana (**Vernal Bloom, Wild Growth**), etc."

July 8, 2004



Q: "Why do the **Fifth Dawn Bringers** look like they have facets in their art?"
--Gabriel, Mesa, Arizona

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

"Gabriel, the Bringers are huge, crystalline creatures (which explains the facets). When I conceived them, I wanted to show that they were manifestations of energy emitted from Mirrodin's five suns, almost like avatars of mana. I asked the artists to represent them as crystalline to show that their power and their nature transcend the metal ecology of Mirrodin. It's, like, symbolic and stuff."

July 7, 2004



Q: "Why does **Goblin Piledriver** have Protection from Blue? It seems kind of random."

--Nathan
Falls, PA, USA

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

"To be quite honest, it's because we were worried about the dominance in Standard constructed tournaments of **Psychatog** decks. By the time we were developing *Onslaught*, the real world was building some quite powerful decks with the smiling atog from *Odyssey* so we tried to sprinkle a number of 'answers' through-out the *Onslaught* block. Our favorite way to react to real-world constructed concerns is with perfectly normal, elegant, interesting designs. Smother is a perfect example of this. Other times we do things a little less elegantly, like **Tsabo's Web** (which was a response to **Rishadan Port**). The **Goblin Piledriver** would probably have been just as interesting without protection from blue, and it would probably have been more elegant and aesthetically appealing without that extra ability junking up the text box but, hey, sometimes you gotta do what you gotta do."

July 6, 2004



Q: "Why did you choose to make enchant worlds instead of legendary enchantments?"

--Trevor

A: From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** lead designer:

"The flavor of enchant worlds was that you were transporting the duel to a new plane. To capture this flavor, it was important that each new enchant world superceded the old one. In addition, the enchant world mechanic does something very different from the legend mechanic. The legend mechanic cares about multiple copies of the same card. Enchant worlds care about any enchant world. I remember playing way back in the day (before I came to Wizards) when my blue/green weenie deck ran **Concordant Crossroads** to be able to deal with **The Abyss**. As you can see enchant worlds and legendary enchantments are quite different mechanics."

July 5, 2004



Q: "In the book *The Moons of Mirrodin*, it is mentioned that the only reason that Geth is the ruler of the Mephidross is that he controls the vampire, and that there is only one. So why isn't the card **Mephidross Vampire** a legend?"

--Jon
Paris, Kentucky, USA

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

"Jon, Geth's hubris leads him to wrongly believe that he controls the only vampire in the Mephidross. Simply put, he's wrong. Although there are only a few, other vampires do prowl the 'Dross; Geth simply believes the one he enslaves is the only one."

July 2, 2004



Q: "Do you have concerns that the individual cards in **Magic** are becoming stronger and stronger over time?"

A: From **Brian Schneider**, **Magic** R&D:

"We always have concerns about that. In general, we like to try and keep the power level, from one set to the next, consistent, on the same level. One set, ideally, should never be considerably better than another. Inevitably, some sets are better than others, but all should contribute to the 'cards I want to play with' pile. As for the power level of individual cards, we keep track of how powerful we think cards will be and how powerful they, in actuality, are. I don't believe individual cards are becoming stronger over time. I do believe that some effects are pushed power-wise for a certain period of time (**Eternal Witness**, for example, is the first good **Regrowth**-variant we've printed in years), and that contributes to the feeling that things are getting more powerful as time goes on. But when one effect gets pushed, another gets weakened... and the balance, in a sense, is maintained."

July 1, 2004



Q: "Are there any plans to give green a small amount of flying again? With **Birds of Paradise** leaving the core set in *Ninth Edition* green will lose its ability to fly. The color of nature without flying, please say it 'ain't' so?"
--Greg, Champlain NY

A: From **Brian Tinsman, Magic R&D:**

"Greg, I'm sad to say it is so. Every time we designers try to sneak a flier into green, the developers act like we dropped a scorpion in their underwear. Simply put, lack of flying is one of green's fundamental weaknesses. It's part of what defines the color. **Birds of Paradise** is a rare exception that has probably only been tolerated this long because of its public support. If development had their way, the Birds would most likely have been emus or dodos or ... you get the idea. However, don't take this to mean that green will never fly again. In some rare cases when there's a good flavor reason to make an exception, we will. After all, we did print a **Moat** variant in red (**Form of the Dragon**). Since 'green = ground' is a rule we won't break very often, it'll be all that much cooler when we do."



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