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August 31, 2004



**Q:** "What are some of the card cycles from Magic's first set?"  
- Jim, Indiana

**A:** From **Mike Elliott, Magic R&D:**

"We do a ton of cycles in every set, and Alpha was no exception. The most notable ones from Alpha are the **Moxes** (and there was a cycle of basic lands also), and the ones we would most like to forget are the **Laces**. I still have a binder with a couple hundred of each Lace. A couple years ago, Ben Bleiweiss compiled a very nice list of the cycles we had done covering all sets out at the time. Any extended answer I could give you would pale in comparison to the comprehensiveness of his work, so here are the links to his article: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)."

August 30, 2004



**Q:** "I was wondering how **Rorix Bladewing** died. A friend of mine told me that **Phage** killed him. Is it true?"  
--Mike  
California, USA

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth, Magic R&D:**

"Sometimes a cool concept generates a cool card design, but sometimes it's the card design that drives the concept. In the case of **Bladewing the Risen**, the card design came first. To reinforce the dragon theme of the **Scourge** set, the card designers had included a black/red 'dracolich' who could strengthen other dragons. Then the developers discovered that the dracolich's comes-into-play ability was too strong, because you could play **Buried Alive** to put three dracoliches in your graveyard, then play a fourth to get all four of them into play. The solution? Make the dracolich a legendary creature. "From there, it's pretty easy to see how things led to **Rorix Bladewing**. Given a choice between a new legendary Dragon that no one had heard of and a revisitation of Rorix, we went for the latter. How did Rorix die? How was he reanimated, by whom, and why? Since Rorix doesn't appear in the *Onslaught*-block novels, that's up to you to imagine."

August 27, 2004



**Q:** "Was there ever a black legend planned for *Mirrodin* block? Artifacts have **Bosh**, Red had **Slobad**, Green has **Glissa**, White has **Raksha**, Blue has **Memnarch**. Black was left without a legend. Was there a legend planned like Geth himself for black or is this just a coincidence?"  
--Skyler  
Bismarck, North Dakota, USA

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

"Just coincidence, Skyler. We knew we would try to give **Glissa**, **Memnarch**, and **Bosh** their own cards when we started, but **Slobad** and **Raksha** both got cards based on how important and interesting they proved to be in the **Magic** novels, which aren't completed until after the corresponding card set is pretty much done. As for Geth . . . well, if you haven't read the novels, Geth's card wouldn't really make a lot of sense. (I don't want to spoil anything, but those of you who have read the novels know what I'm talking about.)"

**August 26, 2004**



**Q:** "What is the latest printed expansion that can still make it into *Ninth Edition*?"  
--Daniel

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

"There is no hard-and-fast rule about what sets can and cannot be included, but it should be obvious from the past that we like to use every resource available to us. *Seventh Edition* contained cards from *Invasion*, which was released just a few months prior. *Eighth Edition* had cards from *Scourge*, the latest expansion at the time. Suffice it to say that there will be cards in *Ninth Edition* that you haven't seen yet."

**August 25, 2004**



**Q:** "What's taking so long with You Make the Card 3? Both the previous ones started in January, but it's the middle of August and 3 hasn't started yet. You haven't chickened out and decided not to do another one, have you?"  
--Nathan, Pennsylvania, USA

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

"Nathan, we're still going to be running You Make the Card 3, we just didn't want it to overlap with [Selecting Ninth Edition](#). As Mark Rosewater states in his [column this week](#), you can expect YMTC3 this fall. It's starting a bit later this time around, but we've got a great twist that we're sure will make it worth the wait."

**August 24, 2004**



**Q:** "When will previews of *Champions of Kamigawa* cards be released on the website?"  
-- Mark, Mount Pleasant, USA

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

"Card previews for *Champions of Kamigawa* will run three weeks, beginning Monday, August 30th. Also, don't miss the art and story previews already running on the [Champions of Kamigawa microsite](#)."

**Q:** "What is the 'metagame?'"

--Johnathon  
Union City, IN

**A:** From **Robert Gutschera**, **Magic** R&D:

"Originally, 'metagame' was a term we used at Wizards for everything surrounding the game (**Magic**, or any game): collecting and trading cards, thinking about decks, having a rating that you improved over time, attending tournaments... everything a person might do to enjoy **Magic** besides the act of sitting down and playing the game itself."

"The term was adopted by the **Magic**-playing community, but in a narrower meaning: for everyone outside of Wizards, 'metagame' means the card environment -- which cards are good, which decks you are likely to see, what specific counters there might be to certain deck types, and so on. People might say things like 'Putting **CoP: Red** in your deck is a metagame choice,' which just means that if the environment you're playing in has lots of people playing red, you play it, and otherwise you don't. Another common thing you hear is 'the metagame right now is...' followed by a list of deck types."

"Here in R&D, we often use the word 'metagame' in this sense, but sometimes we use it in the broader sense as well. Occasionally it gets confusing, but usually we can tell by context."

August 20, 2004



**Q:** "What sort of tournaments are there going to be when *Unhinged* comes out this fall?"

**A:** From **Damon Edmondson**, Program Development Manager, Organized Play:

"There will be *Unhinged* Release Events held at retail stores around the world on Saturday, November 20th. The format will be *Unhinged* 'sealed deck' and the first 32 participants at each location will get a special commemorative foil release card. The top 3 finalists at each location will win a unique *Unhinged* life counter. (There aren't any tournament packs for *Unhinged* so 'sealed deck' really means 5 booster packs of *Unhinged* and as many basic lands as you want.) We are expecting over 1000 stores to participate in this program and we'll post a list of them all on [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com) once we are closer to that date.

"In addition there will be an *Unhinged* Arena season (where the format is 3 booster packs of *Unhinged* plus any one tournament pack of your choice) and there will be *Unhinged* tournaments at GenCon SoCal with Mark Rosewater as master of ceremonies. All of these offerings will be unsanctioned, of course, since *Unhinged* is not legal for DCI-sanctioned tournament play."

August 19, 2004



**Q:** "I remember a question a while ago asking which cards represent the crews of the *Weatherlight* and *Predator*. Similarly, which cards represent the pieces of The Legacy?"

--Aaron

London, Ontario, Canada

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

"Considering how much people claimed to hate the *Weatherlight* Saga at the time, I sure get a lot of questions about it. ;) Anyway, the following artifact cards represent the known pieces of the Legacy: *Chimeric Sphere*; *Juju Bubble*; *Karn, Silver Golem*; *Mind Stone*; *Null Rod*; *Skyshaper*; *Skyship Weatherlight*; *Squee's Toy*; *Thran Forge*; *Thran Tome*; *Touchstone*; and the *Tooth, Eye, Skull, Heart, and Horn of Ramos*. There are other Legacy artifacts identified in books we've published that never made it onto cards."

August 18, 2004



**Q:** "Why did you decide to make *Spinal Parasite* a -1/-1? Wouldn't it have worked just as well as a 0/0?"

--Jim, Cincinnati, Ohio

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

"We hadn't done a -1/-1 before and with Sunburst it just felt like it was the right time. We were looking for a way to make *Spinal Parasite* more unique, and Mike Elliott half-jokingly submitted 'make it a -1/-1.' The development team liked the idea, and thus, *Spinal Parasite* is a -1/-1. It could have been a 0/0 and been more powerful... but sometimes being more powerful isn't more interesting."

August 17, 2004



**Q:** "Has the Future Future League ever had some very powerful deck that the 'real world' tournament scene didn't find?"

- David, Paris, France

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

"We find a lot of powerful decks and degenerate combos that the real world never finds. . . .mostly because developers change the cards first to make them more fair. In *Mirrodin* development, *Vedalken Archmage* proved to be quite saucy when it cost

AND drew cards off of artifact lands. **Soul Foundry's** activation cost used to be 4 mana regardless of the creature. . . leading to far more turn 4, 5, and 6 **Darksteel Colossus** tokens than we wanted to inflict on the public. And if you think **Tooth and Nail** for **Triskelion** and **Mephidross Vampire** is hot stuff now, let me tell you this: the vampire lord used to let its vampire minions also gain +1/+1 counters when they damaged a player. Whenever we got bored of pinging all the opponent's creatures to death, we would ping the opponent a dozen or two times. It could almost be a new motto: "We endure these shenanigans so you don't have to."

**August 16, 2004**



**Q:** "I was looking at my **Atog** Deck and I was wondering, is **Atog** an anagram of 'Goat'? Since goats are known for eating almost anything, and there's an **Atog** for everything (even an **Atog** for **Atogs!**) is it coincidence?"

--Robert  
Houston, TX, USA

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

"Hi Robert,  
You have hit the nail on the head. When **Atog** was first designed for **Antiquities**, **Magic's** second expansion, the creative team was trying to think of a card concept for a living creature that ate metal. As you say, goats are known to eat anything, and they are especially infamous for eating tin cans. A little playing around with the letters, and an adorable little creature was born. Adorable and deadly that is - Osyp Lebedowicz just took home the trophy for **Grand Prix Orlando** partially due to the explosive killing power of this toothy, goatish monster."

**August 13, 2004**



**Q:** "A few years back, you could see **Magic** played on ESPN. Are there any plans to put more **Magic** events on TV anytime soon?"

--Andrew  
Cary, North Carolina, USA

**A:** From **Chris Galvin, Magic Organized Play:**

"Hi, Andrew. Thanks for asking. We don't currently have plans to put **Magic** events back on broadcast or cable TV. While ESPN2, which aired the Pro Tour for about a year in 1999-2000, was happy with the ratings, the production costs of the show wound up being more than we were willing to spend.

"However, since last August we have been pursuing a strategy that I personally think is even cooler. Wizards now does a live video webcast of the final day of each Pro Tour event plus the World Championships. In addition to showing you all the game action, the webcast includes great commentary on the play; interaction with the online audience; interviews with pro players, artists, and other notables; and lots more. This past webcast, from Pro Tour Seattle, was our best one yet. Each one seems to be better than the one before.

"If you haven't checked it out yet, tune in to watch the next webcast. We'll be live from the World Championship in San Francisco, CA on Sunday, September 5, starting at 9 am Pacific time."

**August 12, 2004**



**Q:** "The August 5 Ask Wizards asked for the expansion codes of *all* the expansions, but Wendy Wallace only answered with the codes for **Kamigawa** block. What gives?"

**A:** From **Wendy Wallace, Magic Brand Manager:**

It is possible that I'm rude and didn't answer Goran's question intentionally. It's also possible that I misread the question. I'm going with the second one. Thanks to all the fine folks on the board who pointed out the error of my ways. Here's the complete list.

Product	Product code
Limited Edition Alpha	LEA
Limited Edition Beta	LEB
Unlimited Edition	2ED

<i>Arabian Nights</i>	ARN
<i>Antiquities</i>	ATQ
Revised Edition	3ED
<i>Legends</i>	LEG
<i>The Dark</i>	DRK
<i>Fallen Empires</i>	FEM
<i>Fourth Edition</i>	4ED
<i>Chronicles</i>	CHR
<i>Homelands</i>	HML
<i>Ice Age</i>	ICE
<i>Alliances</i>	ALL
<i>Mirage</i>	MIR
<i>Visions</i>	VIS
<i>Fifth Edition</i>	5ED
<i>Portal</i>	POR
<i>Weatherlight</i>	WTH
<i>Tempest</i>	TMP
<i>Stronghold</i>	STH
<i>Exodus</i>	EXO
<i>Portal: Second Age</i>	P02
<i>Unglued</i>	UGL
<i>Urza's Saga</i>	USG
<i>Anthologies Box Set</i>	ATH
<i>Urza's Legacy</i>	ULG
<i>Portal Three Kingdoms</i>	PTK
<i>Classic Sixth Edition</i>	6ED
<i>Urza's Destiny</i>	UDS
<i>Starter 1999 Edition</i>	S99
<i>Mercadian Masques</i>	MMQ
<i>Battle Royale Box Set</i>	BRB
<i>Nemesis</i>	NEM
<i>Starter 2000 Edition</i>	S00
<i>Prophecy</i>	PCY
<i>Invasion</i>	INV
<i>Beatdown Box Set</i>	BTD
<i>Planeshift</i>	PLS
<i>Seventh Edition</i>	7ED
<i>Apocalypse</i>	APC
<i>Odyssey</i>	ODY
<i>Deck Masters box set</i>	DKM
<i>Torment</i>	TOR
<i>Judgment</i>	JUD
<i>Onslaught</i>	ONS
<i>Legions</i>	LGN
<i>Scourge</i>	SCG
<i>Eighth Edition</i>	8ED
<i>Mirrodin</i>	MRD
<i>Darksteel</i>	DST
<i>Fifth Dawn</i>	5DN
<i>Champions of Kamigawa</i>	CHK
<i>Unhinged</i>	UNH
<i>Betrayers of Kamigawa</i>	BOK
<i>Saviors of Kamigawa</i>	SOK
<i>Ninth Edition</i>	9ED

August 11, 2004



**Q:** "I know R&D has had it out for blue as of late, to try and weaken the overall color. With blue out of the limelight it's nice to see all the other colors become high level colors. But, at heart I am a blue fan. So my question is will blue ever come back to be being a strong color in **Magic**?"

--Patrick  
Kansas City, MO

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

"Yes."

August 10, 2004



**Q:** "I was wondering why the Trample mechanic didn't show up on any card in *Seventh* and *Eighth Edition*. It seems to be a pretty common green ability. What's more, the ability '~ may deal its combat damage to defending player as though it weren't blocked' on creatures like **Thorn Elemental** and **Rhox** does appear, while it seems to me to be a more complex and less 'typically green' ability."

- Thomas

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

"The 'new trample' (what we've taken to calling the ability on **Thorn Elemental** and **Lone Wolf**) is a green ability, mostly because we've assigned it to green. When we decided that we'd eventually stop supporting trample in the Core Sets (some time around the Urza block), we needed a new form of 'evasion' for green, meaning an ability that let it deal damage in lieu of blockers. So we came up with 'new trample' and have used it in the Core Set ever since.

"We're finding out now that the ability isn't as easy to understand as we thought. A popular rules question from players is, 'What happens when my opponent blocks my **Thorn Elemental** with his **Voracious Cobra**?' The real answer is that the Cobra deals two first strike damage to the Elemental and then kills it with its triggered ability long before the Elemental gets to deal its combat damage. But many players believe the defending player should take seven, since the attacker can have the Elemental deal its combat damage to the defending player as though it weren't blocked. I've heard of other minor rules mix-ups involving 'new trample,' which have convinced me that the ability is more complicated than we once believed.

"That complication, combined with the fact that regular old-fashioned **War Mammoth**-style trample is such a big part of expert level expansions, has us looking into reintroducing trample to the Core Set with *Ninth Edition*. The rules team is working on several different reminder text variations, and if we can find one we like that is simple enough and conveys all the necessary information, you might see the 'trample' keyword on white bordered cards in the near future."

August 9, 2004



**Q:** "Why is it that abilities have changed from happening during your upkeep to happening at the start of your upkeep? An example of this is the old version of **Karma** it said during your upkeep but now in *Eighth Edition* **Karma** says at the beginning."

--Kye  
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

**A:** From **Paul Barclay**, **Magic** Rules Manager:

"This was due to the *Sixth Edition* rules changes. When we were cleaning up the rules, we removed the old 'upkeep abilities,' which were a special class of ability. We could do exactly the same thing with a simple triggered ability. So, any cards that used to say 'During your upkeep, sacrifice a Squirrel,' will now say 'At the beginning of your upkeep, sacrifice a Squirrel.'"

August 6, 2004



**Q:** "What does the expansion symbol for *Onslaught* represent?"

--Anastasia  
Miami, Florida USA

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

"The expansion symbol for *Onslaught* is a small graphic which represents one of the 'Morph' mechanics in the *Onslaught* expansion.



"The idea was that you could summon a 2/2 generic colorless creature by playing that card face down, then at the right moment you could turn your card over and turn it into a 'normal' creature. The creative team had to find a way to show what a 'morph' creature would look like and how different creatures would burst out of this 2/2 colorless shell when activated. Below are some of the early concepts we came up with. The *Onslaught* expansion symbol is a stylized version of this key mechanic.



"Expansion symbols are always a challenge. I hoped you liked them."

**August 5, 2004**



**Q:** "In a [recent 'Ask Wizards'](#) you revealed that the expansion code for *Champions of Kamigawa* will be CHK. Is there a list of expansion codes available for all editions? I have been scouring both the Wizards site and the WWW in vain!"  
- Goran, Australia

**A:** From **Wendy Wallace**, **Magic** Brand Manager:

"Goran, the codes for the rest of the Kamigawa block are BOK for *Betrayers of Kamigawa* and SOK for *Saviors of Kamigawa*."

**August 4, 2004**



**Q:** "In light of Aaron's recent [article about creature type Human](#), did anyone at R&D argue to make **Raise the Alarm** produce 1/1 white *Human* Soldier tokens?"  
--Reuben Barrientes  
San Marcos, CA, USA

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

"If I recall correctly, Reuben, no one did, because everybody likes the idea (for now) of normally keeping our token creatures to a single type. In addition to the appeal of simplicity, we like token creatures to have as little gameplay-relevant 'text' as possible so you don't get totally lost keeping track of stuff, especially when there's more than one kind of token in play. "There was a little discussion about making the tokens Human instead of Soldier, but (a) Soldier is more mechanically interesting, especially after the *Onslaught* block, and (b) making them Soldiers enables us to reprint the card down the line with nonhuman creatures in the illustration. As it stands, the spell summons two soldiers of an unspecified kind to fight for you—the current illustration just happens to show human ones."



**August 3, 2004**



**Q:** "Why not just restrict **Skullclamp** in Standard? With just one, you have much less chance of drawing it. Is only one really that dangerous?"

--Howard  
Philadelphia, PA

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

"The canned answer is that we don't restrict cards in Standard (or Block, or Extended, or Type 1.5). The only format that uses a Restricted List is Type 1, and that's because if we ban cards there, there'd be no place to play many of them at all.

"So why don't we restrict cards in Standard? In general, we don't want to add more randomness to the game than there already is. There were complaints that certain matches were coming down to 'whoever drew **Skullclamp** won,' and by only allowing one copy per deck there would be more of a feeling of 'random unfairness.'

"Plus, in the case of **Skullclamp**, would restriction really make it show up less? With cards like **Trinket Mage**, **Steelshaper's Gift**, and **Taj-Nar Swordsmith** in the format, even one **Skullclamp** is not difficult to get on the table. And we don't want it showing up at all."

**August 2, 2004**



**Q:** "Is there any recommended method for cleaning cards?"

--Clifford S.  
Abbeville, Louisiana

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

"Your question left it a little unclear exactly what you wanted to clean off your cards, so I took my best guess. When white-bordered cards get played for a long time without sleeves, they can sometimes pick up some little black flecks of gunk around the border. I asked around, and local Professor of **Magic** Anthropology Dr. Worth Wollpert had the answer. If you take a half-used pencil eraser and gently wipe away the flecks, they will come right off. Some brave souls even say you can use diluted Windex to do the same thing, but be sure to master this on lands before you try it on expensive cards. Using sleeves will also prevent the flecks from appearing."



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