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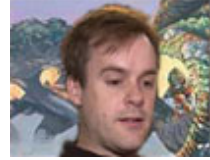
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Oscar Clans for Icy Fun



Twilight wins MTGO Community Contribution Award

Chad Ellis · Online and Enjoying It
 Tuesday, August 3, 2004

It's really getting hard to think of titles that might trick Zinger but still refer to the article in question! This week's title gives a nod to the Net's most prolific writer on Type I, while of course the "Oscar" refers to the MTGO Community Contribution Award.

We Have a Winner!

Gathion, when nominating him, said he didn't see how anyone else could win. Zinger said he had the vote of the common man. And you agreed.

The winner of the first MTGO Community Contribution Award is Twilight, founder of the /join auction player room, probably the most-used player-made room in all of MTGO. Despite generating some controversy from players who felt he campaigned for votes (Twilight counters that he only encouraged people to vote, not to vote specifically for him), Twilight won a sweeping majority of MTGO player votes. The final tally was:

MTGO Community Award		
Twilight (also known as Beldar)	1263	73.7%
Tobold and Nushae	183	10.7%
Gathion	165	9.6%
Deke Young	103	6.0%
Total	1714	100.0%

So what's the big deal about the Auction room?

A few people on the boards have suggested that Twilight's contribution isn't such a big deal, because he "only" made the Auction room and isn't responsible for its growth – that it has grown out of its own momentum and from the use and contribution of other players. In my opinion, that just shows how valuable Twilight's original contribution was. Anyone who creates something, whether a company or a community, knows that the best measure of success is that it keeps growing without you constantly supporting it.



When MTGO was young, Twilight thought it needed a room like one of the trading rooms that had existed during beta testing. So for several days he spent his waking hours online,

advertising “/join auction” in the various player rooms and in holding auctions with his own cards to keep it active.

The result has already been discussed [in this column](#). /Join auction rivals the Message Board and Marketplace for trading and is probably the best way to sell cards quickly or to sell an odd lot of cards, as well as being a great place for patient collectors to search for bargains. Hundreds of MTGO players use it every day, and this resource owes its start to Twilight's insight and effort.

So congratulations, Twilight, and thanks from me and the rest of the MTGO community. The foil Demons are yours.

Except there's a twist. Twilight and I spoke earlier and he explained that he didn't want to accept any prize. He's happy to be recognized and also happy that other people who have contributed to MTGO are being recognized, but he doesn't want a prize for it. So we agreed to use the prizes to kick-start another Twilight project that never really got off the ground: /join free.

/Join free is just what it sounds like: a place where players can get cards for free. A lot of regular MTGO players have built up tremendous collections with more copies of common and uncommon cards than we can count. Meanwhile, a lot of new players would like to find some spare commons or uncommons for their decks. In the real world, they might find their cards in a common box or in the leftovers from a draft. On MTGO we're going to try to create a player room that serves the same purpose.

I suspect that the reason /join free failed is that there isn't a lot of pull for the supply side of the equation. In /join auction you have people with cards who want to turn them into tickets and people with tickets who want to turn them into cards. But for /join free to work we need people with cards who want to turn them into warm fuzzies.

So here's how we're going to try to start it again. Tomorrow (Wednesday) at noon EDT I'm going to go to /join free. I'll bring my collection with me, and I'm going to let people take up to 32 cards of their choice from my spares. This will include a lot of commons and uncommons but also plenty of rares – although don't get your hopes up of getting a free **Arcbound Ravager**.

I'm also going to bring the Foil Demons that Twilight has declined for himself, and will be giving them away as well. How that works exactly will depend on who shows up, but my preference will be to give them to people who are also giving cards away to newcomers.

One last thought. Please don't come just because you like free things or because you figure you can pick up some cards and then sell them for tickets. Come either because you could really use some cards or because you have excess cards you'd like to give away to a new player.

And now, an aside in honor of *Ice Age* Week

This column doesn't usually get involved in the various weekly themes. After all, what is the MTGO take on Red Week? If you're part of the **magicthegathering.com** writing family you get emails from Scott on upcoming themes with his thoughts on which columns should be “on theme” and but mine is rarely

if ever one of them.

No longer. *Ice Age* Week is too much to resist. Of course, *Ice Age* isn't available online, and I doubt that it ever will be. (Although wouldn't it be cool if they started moving back in time for online sets?) But we do have one signature *Ice Age* card available online due to a reprint in *Mirrodin*: **Icy Manipulator**.

The *Mirrodin* reprint is, of course, the second Icy reprint; the card originated in the “Unlimited” basic set. It made sense to reprint the popular card in a set about Ice, and I think almost every long-term **Magic** player must have been happy to see one of our favorite artifacts reprinted in the artifact block.

So what makes Icy Manipulator so powerful?

The most obvious use for an Icy is to control a single opposing permanent – no matter what it is. If they have a fattie, you tap it before it attacks (or blocks). If they have only one Forest you keep them from casting non-instant Green spells by tapping it during their upkeep. That kind of



flexibility is very powerful...so powerful, in fact, that “Icy your Icy” used to be a common phrase in constructed play.

But **Icy Manipulator** can do much more than just negate your opponent's best permanent. Imagine a situation in which you have two **Hill Giants** and an **Icy Manipulator** staring down an opponent with two 4/4 Beast tokens. Neither of you has anything else other than land. Each turn, before he declares attackers, you tap one of his Beasts and he declines to attack since at the very least he would be letting you swing back for six.

So far so good. Your **Icy Manipulator** is letting your two Giants stand off against two Beasts. But you can do more – you can go aggressive.

Let's say you're both at 20 life. You tap a Beast on his turn as before and then tap the other on your own turn, attacking. He takes six, down to fourteen. Now on his turn he untaps and doesn't have to fear your Icy, but his situation is still difficult. If he swings back for eight, you'll be able to attack for six while leaving your Icy untapped. Then on his turn you'll tap one of his creatures and he'll be in the same situation as before. If he attacks for four, he only puts you to eight while he takes six more and goes to two. He may be forced not to attack at all, in

which case you untap and are in our starting board position but with you still at 20 and him at 14.

Icy Manipulator still does this in Limited matches today. If your opponent has a massive creature advantage, an Icy often turns it neutral. If she has a slight advantage, an Icy often turns it into your favor, letting you force through an attack every other turn while your opponent can't alpha strike back because the Icy will make you win the race.

In the right deck, specifically creatureless (or creature light) control decks, the Icy is also a natural card-advantage engine. A smart opponent may try to put out only one threat against a deck with **Wrath of God**, but an Icy locks that creature down. If you want to have a threat at all you have to put out a second creature. Then they get Wrath'd away, a clean 2-for-1. And best of all, the Icy is still there, waiting to do it again.

So why don't we see more Icy's in play?

Alas, **Icy Manipulator** isn't the powerhouse that it used to be. Instead of appearing in Pro Tour winning Constructed decks, today's Icy is lucky if it sees play in Friday Night **Magic** and has to limit its bragging to still being a first pick in Limited. So what happened?

First of all, our decks are better. This is partly due to a gradual increase in the strength of cards (particularly creatures) and partly due to an increase in the skill and knowledge of deckbuilders. When Icy was an important constructed card, so was **Ernham Djinn**. The Djinn has been reprinted as well, but like its cousin Icy it is no longer considered a serious constructed card. Beatdown decks are more efficient and fatties are more powerful, and thus control cards like **Icy Manipulator** have to be more efficient as well. Aggressive decks are less likely to be about one or two threats than they used to be; against a Goblin or Affinity deck you don't need an Icy out to “force” them to play out their hand. Moreover, control players now have more and better card-drawing options, making it unnecessary to use permanents to gain card advantage. **Icy Manipulator** may give you card advantage against some decks, but **Deep Analysis** or **Thirst for Knowledge** will give it to you against anyone, and sooner.

Second, our decks are different. **Armageddon** and **Winter Orb** are no longer with us. Without them, the Prison archetype – using mana-producing artifacts, **Winter Orb**, **Armageddon** and **Wrath of God** to lock out the game – is gone with it. Prison was a natural home for **Icy Manipulator**, since it could tap the only land your opponent was ever able to untap, the Islands he needed to counter your **Armageddon**, or simply your own **Winter Orb** so that all your lands untapped. In addition, of course, it could keep a single threat locked down until a

second one joined it, when of course they would get Wrathful away.

Finally, we live in a land of artifact hatred. Back in the day, a deck running Disenchants knew they'd probably have targets, but might not. A beatdown deck would rarely even think of running *Shatter* or *Crumble* in the main. But in an environment where few if any decks are artifact free, and where artifact hatred is so efficient (*Annul*, *Oxidize*, *Tel-Jilad Justice*, *Shatter*), a four mana artifact that needs to stay in play for multiple turns to show its power just isn't likely to work. Being reprinted in an "Ice" themed set didn't hurt the Manipulator, but being reprinted in an artifact set relegated it to the status of Limited star.

End aside...back to your regularly scheduled MTGO content.

Clans

Since this week's column is about celebrating contribution to the MTGO community, it makes sense to focus on one of MTGO's main community features: clans. There are thousands of clans on MTGO, and for their members they form a core group of opponents, people to chat with or bounce deck ideas off of, and most of all, friends.

A clan is sort of a super-charged buddy list, with a captain in charge of who gets invited. You can only belong to one at a time, and each clan is limited to twenty players. Your clan's cumulative prize points are tracked on the MTGO Clan page, and whenever you're on MTGO you have a clan chat window open automatically. But the functionality of a clan doesn't do justice to what clans have become in the MTGO community.

Finding a Clan

As with most circles of friends, most people find a clan without really looking for one. While you can go to the Clan room and will probably find a clan or two that are looking for members, your best bet is probably just to play in your favorite areas and talk with people you like about their clans. Sax (aka Scott Smith of Clan *Spoon*) had a typical experience. "I was invited to join after beating the stuffing out of an existing clan member. He commented that I wasn't very social. I apologized saying, 'Sorry, but I'm talking on the phone, feeding my 3 month old, and helping my son play Harry Potter on the computer... I'm a little frazzled.' He was impressed at my multitasking, I suppose."

Other members of *Spoon* were invited for similar reasons. Sax explains, "The clan originally formed based on people met playing leagues. Someone would chat with a guy in-game, decide he was interesting and might be a good fit and ask the rest of the clan if they thought he'd be a good addition."

Melkor_the_Great found *Only Hell Will Fill Your Void* in a similar way, albeit quite different given the players involved! "I bumped into Neo (the clan Captain) under my old name (CounterBurn). He had me blocked I was the only person on his block list! So he unblocked me asked me how I was the only player on the list. I told him to shut the hell up and just play. He laughed about it we got to talking and realized we had a similar view of the MTGO community." Neo invited Melkor to join *OHWFYV*, and since then they have seen their clan grow to the point where they've added *OH* part two and have applied for *OH* part three.

Clan Spirit, Clan Attitude

As the above anecdotes show, all clans are not alike. The "similar view" that seems shared by all members of *OHWFYV* is that the MTGO world has too many complainers (known as Muppets in *OH*-speak) and not enough trash talk. They take great pride in crushing other clans in Emperor matches (they built a deck that often kills on turn three) and Melkor keeps an online page of quotes from people he's beaten. I hung out with in their private chat room and within minutes we



were talking trash about **Magic**, sex and pretty much everything else. They're a young crowd, full of fun and energy and not afraid to push the envelope of good taste, as their website www.onlyhell.com shows. Personally, I love them, but they aren't for everyone.

By contrast, *The Legendary Dragons Realm* is a bit more my age and laid back. They have plenty of clan pride and also have their own website, www.geocities.com/warrentonmo, but instead of being kids some of the members have kids of their own. Roaring Possum (aka Tom Travis) explains that their captain, "just got a bunch of people that are laid back about the game. Any game that comes up from challenges in the clan room avoids games with people talking smack and complaining." *The Legendary Dragons Realm* competes with two other like-minded clans (detailed on their web page) and get together online to discuss decks and test league decks against each other.

What impressed me the most about the people I talked with is how much their clans mean to them. Darklord01111111 proudly proclaimed his clan, *The Unholy Warriors*, to be the best, "because we're all koo down to earth guys and we kick. :-). These guys are like my brothers."

OHWFYV not only has their own MTGO chat room and website with message boards and email addresses (name@onlyhell.com), they also use "Teamspeak" software to communicate by voice. Several members have driven hours to meet in "real life" and there is talk of a clan vacation in the works.

Sax says his clan involvement has gone down somewhat as he spends more time in the /join bbs room. "The BBS functions as a 100 person clan that is not-exclusive of other clans. It provides a larger community base." Nevertheless, Sax says his clan is an important part of his online identity. "As part of Survivor **Magic** I had the option of joining Vulshok Tribe clan, but declined. My clan membership isn't something I'd give up easily... even temporarily."

Finding the right clan can make your MTGO experience that much richer. So don't hesitate to ask someone about his or her clan after you've had a good match or trade or conversation. And if you'd like to share some stories about your own clans, please join me in this column's forum.

Hugs 'til next time,
Chad

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