

Aaron Forsythe
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We're in a time of transition. *Mirrodin* block is slipping away and *Kamigawa* block is almost upon us. Worlds is approaching, signaling the end of another season of pro **Magic**. In house, "Control" (the 2005 large set) is moving from design to development. Sounds like a good time to clean out my mailbox!

I must have chosen some good topics to write about recently, because my mail has been outstanding, both in number and in how well thought out they are.

Let's begin.

Regarding "Skullclamp, We Hardly Knew Ye":

I've never written in response to an article before, but I just wanted to personally thank you for writing such a great explanation on the Skullclamp ban. You didn't try to dodge the bullet or blame someone else. Instead, you told us straight-up what happened and how it happened. I really appreciate that kind of honesty.

I completely agree with the philosophy that R&D must continue to push the envelop to keep the game fresh. It's much better to have to ban a card here and there than to have a set be so weak and boring that no cards even come close to being ban-worthy. *cough*Legions*cough*

So keep pushing the limits of design and keep being honest with us in your columns, and you'll always have a true fan in me. Thanks again!

--Josh Wittenmyer

Thanks, Josh. It was a tough subject, and I'm glad that I could convey everything I needed to in a way that made sense to (just about) everyone. We're still pushing cards, and we hope that no more "Skullclamps" have slipped through the cracks.

Thanks for explaining all that; I no longer feel so bad watching my best decks, decks I have spent months slaving over, inevitably fall to the new guy's Skullclamp/affinity deck. You'd think 2 or 3 Mutilates and a Visara would keep a guy down. Sheesh.

--Alex Miller



It felt as if balance had been restored... If only we hadn't made Cranial Plating...

Of course, some poor souls were caught in the crossfire...

NOOo!!! I finally made a Type 2 Standard Green-Black Oversold Cemetery/Promise of Power deck with Skullclamp and it is banned from Standard. NOO!!!

--Joel Adelsberg

Sorry, Joel, but for every disgruntled soul like yourself there are many more cheering faithful.

Banning the Clamp in Standard and Block hasn't gotten rid of it totally. In light of the recent Online Worlds Qualifiers, the following question has been raised many, many times:

I know, the Online-Extended should be the same as [paper] Extended, but we don't have all the tools available the offline-community has. So it's quite a different playing field. Are there any considerations to ban Skullclamp in Online-Extended (or Extended) too? Slowly Extended has grown to a viable format on MTGO, but it looks like Skullclamp is ruining this.

--Oliver Auth

We have taken notice of the problem of Skullclamp in Online Extended, and are discussing how to handle it. Rest assured that we're treating the problem seriously, and you should expect to hear something about it within a month's time.

On to more "big picture" stuff...

Hi Aaron,

Firstly, great column, you've definitely kept Friday's MTG site a consistently interesting read. Secondly I love 5th Dawn, sunburst in particular-great job.


Now 2 issues I'd like to raise:

1) I agree that Development should avoid another bland Homelands set, but I don't understand why this means they should consciously make some cards strictly better than others in all circumstances. This will always be the case of course, but it worries me when I read about Development deliberately 'pushing cards' or 'aggressively costing'. As I see it the closer the cards are in power level the more diverse and fun an environment you get, and their goal should be equality, but at a high enough power level to make the cards exciting.

2) Please can you keep an eye out for anything in Unhinged that could make it into 'sensible' Magic. I say this because I think Mindslayer is a wonderful card, but I suspect it wouldn't have been printed if Unhinged had come out before Mirrodin. I also think 'The Cheese Stands Alone' and other cards in Unglued, would have made fine cards in 'sensible' Magic.

Thanks for reading

Will

Thanks for the letter, Will. To your first point: I know you've heard this a million times, but **Magic** is all about change, and pendulums, and all that other metaphorical stuff. Seriously, we aren't out to make a "flat" game where each card's power level is no more than "epsilon" greater or lower than any other card. While that game might be massively skill-testing, it wouldn't be that exciting. Plus, there wouldn't be any environmental swings as good cards that do new things are introduced. Eternal Witness is a fantastically overpowered card that has made the color green very robust in Block and Standard, and has inspired at least one totally new deck (Crystal Witness). If we had given it its "fair" cost using some sort of theoretical calculation on power level, it would have been somewhere in the neighborhood of , and not generated nearly the reaction nor the impact that it did.

There has to be "best cards," and the reason we say that we "push" things is because we like to have some control over what those "best cards" are. If we didn't consciously choose to have some cards

end up as really good, we'd never be able to pin down what tournament metagames look like, never be able to shore up weaknesses in colors, and never be able to make new themes and mechanics look attractive. To keep the game healthy—and stable—we need the ability to do all three.

As for point two... our rules manager actually told Mark Rosewater not to put certain cards in the upcoming *Unhinged* set because they could be made to work in real **Magic**. So we aren't condemning all the weird ideas to the "joke" sets; on the contrary, we are looking to fit weird ideas into mainstream **Magic** wherever we can.

What that means is, if Mindslaver isn't wacky enough for *Unhinged*, what exactly is? You'll have to wait and see...

Regarding Randy's "Here We Go Again":

With the new trend of letting players have a large say in the contents of the core set, I thought I would suggest allowing players to select how they would like the rules text to appear on basic lands. Since it is not something that will directly affect game play, I thought this was a perfect example of something that would be a good choice for the voters of Magicthegathering.com to make.

By letting people decide amongst the classic dummy lands of alpha-fifth edition, the newer lands of 6th-8th, and perhaps some other option, you are allowing the players to tell you exactly what will make them happy. That is the point of these votes, isn't it: To let the players make themselves happy?

In a time when you are allowing players to select what cards, what flavor text, and even what art they want for the cards in core set, allowing players to select how they want the rules text on basic lands to appear seems like an obvious choice for something to put to the vote.

Thank you for your time.

**Sincerely,
Michael A. Lane**

Michael,

Your letter is interesting, but it misses what the Core Set is supposed to be about. The Core Set exists as the entry point to **Magic**, hence stuff like reminder text on flying, no multi-colored cards, no block-specific keywords, etc. Our research has shown us that lands with big mana symbols on them worked the best for getting across the difference between lands and spells and the idea of using mana for spells, especially for players trying to learn without the help of someone that already knows the game. For that reason, the lands we make now do not have any text on them.

We cannot relinquish control of our intro-level product (or any decisions made with new players in mind) to enfranchised players, because they won't choose what's best for the game as a whole. Just read any message boards on *Ninth Edition*, and you'll see that long-time players want more power and complexity than we're willing to give them. Giving them the ability to make changes to the Core Set to suit their needs would only serve to push the set farther away from one of its main purposes.



***The Core Set exists as
the entry point to
Magic***

Of course, the whole set is not just for beginners. The votes we do for "Selecting *Ninth Edition*" allow us to do things that make the enfranchised players happy without compromising other things we feel are important.

What do you think of this card match up? Argothian Wurm vs. Hunted Wumpus. It works because neither card is too overpowered, and on top of that, it is not a tough choice. The choice is just a matter of which card you think has the easier to get around drawback! Me and my Magic buddies agree, we would love to see this match up (though we have had many heated arguments about which card would win)!

--Patrick Allen

Patrick,

I love Argothian Wurm and remember trying to make a deck around it using Fallow Earth, Plow Under, and Howling Mines. But unfortunately our 6/6 trampling pal is on the Reserve List, meaning we aren't allowed to reprint him.

I think the Wurm would have whooped the Wumpus' ass.

Regarding Randy's "Grinder Memories":

In this piece, Randy talked of a Sands of Time / Equipoise combo that is difficult to grasp...

Regarding your article "Grinder Memories": I don't know if it is just me, but i cant figure out how that combo deck works, much less the actual lock. It seems like the cards have no connection at all. But this is probably one of those things that once someone points it out, ill be like "Oh yah". If you wouldn't mind, i would like to see a little explanation on the deck, as it is very intriguing, in the beginning of the next article.

--Peter Roby



I'll answer that. Oracle text for the cards in question:

Sands of Time

4

Artifact

Each player skips his or her untap step.

At the beginning of each player's upkeep, that player simultaneously untaps each tapped artifact, creature, and land he or she controls and taps each untapped artifact, creature, and land he or she controls.

Equipoise

2W

Enchantment

At the beginning of your upkeep, for each artifact target player controls in excess of the number you control, choose an artifact he or she controls. Repeat this process for creatures and lands. The chosen permanents phase out.

The way phasing works is that "before your untap step," phase out all permanents with phasing, and phase in everything that is phased out. With Sands of Time in play, no one gets an untap step, so

nothing naturally phases. Equipose causes things to phase out at other times, though, so each turn it would phase out all of your opponent's creatures (as you'd have none) and all or most of his land (as you'd have sacrificed yours to the effect of a card like Desolation). With the board locked up, you'd win with something like Miser's Cage, which you could play off a Dark Ritual. Wacky, to be sure.

Regarding "Angels in the Outfield":

I am serious when I say these things. If the 2/2 Dragon you mention in your article was creature type Whelp, then I wouldn't have a single problem with it.

Consider this quote: "A DRAGON is flying above you!!!"

What's the first thing that comes to mind? Eclipse-action huge monster, yes? Or a tiny little guy?

Honestly, "baby dragon" is like "jumbo shrimp". I guess the contradiction can be cute if you're into that sort of thing, but I feel that the term "dragon" has certain connotations and "cute" isn't one of them.



A Crusade for creature type Dragon should NOT be affecting a little baby.

However, a Crusade for creature type Whelp would be interesting. I can imagine that happening in a MtG novel.

--ayk

I disagree, ayk. Is a baby duck not a duck? Is a baby wolf not a wolf? Are the Muppet Babies not Muppets? The options R&D were considering for Furnace Whelp's creature type were Dragon (what it received), Dragon Whelp (two types, one to show it was a dragon; the other to show it wasn't *really* a dragon), and Drake (if we decided we didn't want a 2/2 dragon after all). If the concept was to be a dragon--even a baby one--it would have had the Dragon type.

Most readers liked the idea of Furnace Whelp as a Dragon, but ayk's letter was not alone in his (her?) dissent.

Since the "Dragon" poll came from an article about Angels, here's an Angel-related email:

I have to disagree with your statement that Akroma was more powerful before changes were made. I do not think islandhome or phasing make Akroma any good... although I would have loved to see bands with other come back to confuse even more!

--Jeffrey

Jeffrey,

The Akroma notes I pasted from Multiverse were real, although not actually serious. The card as designed looked very similar to what was printed, but various designers and developers had fun going in and adding more and more random abilities to her (like phasing and islandhome). No one actually had any intention of printing Akroma with those bad old abilities.

And "bands with other" is never coming back. Never.

Regarding "Painted into a Corner":

I think "art driven" cards are a good idea, but only if used in moderation. Let maybe 5-10 artists that you know to be really good come up with something of their own design that fits within the parameters of the current plane and work with those. Any more than that just starts to feel like a bunch of random cards with abilities that match the art, but don't mesh with the rest of the set.

--Aramis Troche

Aramis, we're always looking for ways to let artists and other creative types have more say in shaping how each new **Magic** set will look and feel. What happened in *Fifth Dawn* was probably not ideal; we tried some new approaches with the *Kamigawa* block. All "salesmanship" aside, I honestly believe that the next block has the best art of any **Magic** sets of all time.

I voted "no" in this week's poll, but I really meant "no if it causes you to make the set less than ideal from R&D's perspective." Your comments on Arachnoid suggest you might have wanted to do something other than an "uncommon artifact Spider" for that card's slot, and I don't play Magic just to look at cool fantasy art. For that matter, to me the art on the cards you described doesn't seem any better or worse than any other art.

--Mark S. Cipolone



It's not that the art on Arachnoid or Cosmic Larva or any of the other cards I mentioned is "better" than the art on other cards. The idea of the experiment was to let the artists create creatures that we wouldn't have arrived at by our normal means (think up a card, write an art description that tries to explain the card, have someone paint it). It certainly did what we wanted; I can't imagine a scenario wherein we design a card that would be best represented by a hovering red balloon!

Regarding "Classifying Samite Healer":

Regarding your article "Classifying Samite Healer": I'm writing you to put forth another option for 9th edition. I voted in your poll to errata all cards in 9th that need the new race-class types. However, I feel I should be specific. Why not errata to add the Human creature type, and to update things like Savannah Lions and Nekrataal, but leave things like Raging Goblin and Elvish Piper alone. Humans are intuitively Human from the art, and Lions are obviously Cats. But to me, Elvish Piper is not obviously a Bard, and Raging Goblin is not obviously a Berserker. I am also strongly of the opinion that you should never errata cards unless they are being reprinted or don't work with a new rules change. Just my opinion, one of many I know, but I felt I should share it.

--Brian McClure

Brian,

This issue is one of the tougher ones we've had to tackle recently, and we're only now figuring out exactly what we're going to do for *Ninth*. But I'm happy to say that we have come to a consensus about issuing errata to old cards, and that we agree with your statement. Regardless of if/how we change cards for the next Core Set, we will not be changing cards that aren't being reprinted.

The last two alternatives [in your poll -- Errata every card in the set that should have a race-class type; Errata every card in Magic that should have a race-class type] are way open in interpretation, e.g. Savannah Lions. Should it be a Lions

Beast? a Cat Beast? In order to differentiate it from a Cat Soldier or a Cat Barbarian?

The opinions are likely wide open. Therefore leave them at the intuitive type. This is a game not a taxonomy. Otherwise one can argue to include Reptile and Mammal in the type line.

**Your Lutz
--Lutz Hofmann**

Lutz,

Race-class as defined by our creative team only applies to "sentient" creatures that you could imagine being part of a society and having a job. Loxodon Mender is an Elephant Cleric because the Loxodons are sentient and have a society. Trained Armodon, conversely, is a "mindless" creature, and will not be getting a "class" added to its type, remaining a simple Elephant. Whatever happens with Savannah Lions (should it be reprinted) would not involve adding an arbitrary second type. I agree that **Magic** is not a game of taxonomy.

I completely agree that you can't have a mass of race/class and just classes in the set. I think errata makes the most sense.

But how about instead of adding human to cards that need it, you take away human from the recent additions to 9th? I believe it would involve changing overall less cards, and having the "creature-x" instead of "creature-x y" would look a lot simpler for new players.

What you didn't mention in your article is whether race has any effect at all with cards in 9th, for example if you're reprinting An-Zerrin Ruins. If it doesn't, aside from the irrelevant Goblin King, than just making Thought Courier a Wizard for the core set, letting everyone who would care know it's just for the new players and not an actual change.

--Noah Weil

Noah,



You're forcing me to give away information! Curse you! Coat of Arms, the definitive "tribal" card and fan-favorite around the globe, will be returning in *Ninth Edition*. The existence of that card alone is reason enough to synch up creature types not just within *9E*, but across the game as a whole.

You may like or dislike how Coat of Arms will interact with a potential bunch of human cards, but that interaction will be better than the sloppiness of having some human-looking cards say "Wizard" and others say "Human Wizard".

Additionally, we chose to go with the race-class model for *Mirrodin* forward, and we aren't renegeing on that. Thought Courier was printed under that system as a Human, and we have no plans of stripping that off. We want our message to be consistent at the very least.

You are all overlooking a very obvious solution.

Why not just rename the silly things *now*? Why wait for reprints in an expert-level set? Does Gleemax have a secret police that will put anyone who

suggests such a violation of long-standing policy into a locked dungeon with no lawyer?

I know cards have historically appeared first in expert-level sets, but it seems to me that doing something that's fundamentally a reprint with a name change (as Thought Courier is) isn't something you need to test-drive. After all, if we were sticking to history, we wouldn't even consider adding "Human" to the cards.

Take the cards that need "Human," rename them all, add "Human," and call it a day. Hell, do it via adjective puree if you can't think of any other method. I look forward to playing with Venerable Healer and Samite Monk.

**Best,
Natalie**

--Natalie Overstreet Ramsey

Natalie,

Usually long-standing policy has a good reason for being long-standing. In the case of not introducing new cards in the Core Set, it's because we don't want to force anyone that has an extensive collection to feel that they must purchase the Core Set--in addition to three expert-level expansions per year--just to stay competitive. Sure, it might not matter with a new Samite Healer, but there are tournament level cards we'd like to reprint that don't have the "Human" type on them. Theoretically, if we made new versions of White and Black Knight, but added "Human" and renamed them Good Knight and Bad Knight, you'd need to get your hands on those new cards for tournaments, regardless of how many of the originals you owned. We like the current policy and aren't deviating from it here.

Regarding "Red Can Do This?":

Seeing your rundown of red's share of the current color pie drew attention to the biggest mistake recently printed, from a color pie perspective: Shunt. There is nothing red about Deflection, other than the idea that blue has "too much" and red has "too little." Changing a target, no questions asked, no coins flipped, no randomness or risk at all, is the complete antithesis of what red represents.

Should red be able to deflect something? Sure, but not with such precision, and never better than blue. I think the splashiness of the *Judgment* sorceries (Browbeat, Breaking Point, etc) is perfectly acceptable because those are not completely controlled by the caster. You might get what you want, or you might not. That lack of control makes them acceptable, flavorwise.

Shunt is a totally different beast. It serves up a new target, and that's it. Not red at all. Not only that, it's cheaper than its descendant. It also has some particularly ugly artwork, like something you might cut out of a cereal box. All in all, a really frustrating card.

If you are thinking of putting Shunt in ninth edition, please, PLEASE reconsider. The card is a mistake better forgotten than reprinted.

Thanks for reading my rant.

A concerned caster of cerulean chicanery,

Erik Olson

Erik,

In the past, blue's label as the "tricky" color meant it could do just about anything. It could counter spells, change their targets, steal stuff, bounce stuff, draw cards, take extra turns, change colors, change types, you name it. As we put various mechanics and abilities under the microscope recently, we realized that much of what blue was doing before wasn't really blue.

Blue is a pretty grim color. It thinks too much and approaches all problems from a very logical standpoint. Red, on the other hand, is very fun-loving and crazy (gosh, do I sound like Rosewater or what?). Chaos, from red's viewpoint, doesn't always have to be about coin flipping and choosing stuff at random, but instead also encompasses making things not work the way others think they should. Changing targets has a very wacky, practical-joke feel to it, which really embodies red, whether the new target is chosen at random or not.



You are free to disagree, but I'll argue that you are tainted by the past. If Shunt was in *Ice Age* in Deflection's place, it would have felt right at the time, and would continue feeling right today.

It made me wonder, what does R&D think of Browbeat? I always thought that perfectly fit red, and was a great way for red to get card drawing. By the way, Magma Jet is one of the coolest cards in Fifth Dawn. Which is full of cool cards.

--Nick Farrell

Mechanically, Browbeat is the perfect card for allowing red to draw cards. The unfortunate part is that giving your opponent control over what happens severely weakens the effect. You should expect to see red continuing to get cards like those in the Odyssey "punisher" group that allow red to use its own

methods to accomplish what other colors do, but they will probably never end up as tournament staples.

Regarding "The Power Behind Affinity":

I'm sure you guys have already thought of this, but a succinct way to address the power of the affinity decks would be by a simple change the affinity keyword. Make it work only off of non-basic land artifacts.

--Gordon Chamberlin

Gordon,

Hindsight is 20/20, but we have a policy of not issuing errata on cards to fix their power level (just ask all the Type 1 players that have felt the sting of the Worldgorger Dragon combo). We printed them, they're good, and they will remain good. Should things get way out of hand again, our solution is to ban something.

You are right on with your assessment. The players at my shop (I am the owner) have often complained very loudly about the power of the DOV and synergy with Ravager in artifact heavy decks. We all believe very strongly in our MTG playing community that Affinity, as a whole, while an interesting mechanic on certain cards and in certain cool interactions, is ruined by the artifact lands (despite their storyline flavouring), and breaks the resource management strategy and skill of the game. No card should cost zero without good reason. I thought this was a very stringent R&D rule of thumb?

As I am a regular player of many other games, I see it as a very bad mistake from a game mechanic point of view.

Steve @ Mojo Games

Steve,

We can't help ourselves, really. We create rules, policies, and guidelines, and then look for opportunities to deviate from them. Normally we don't want to make "free" spells, but come on, who is ever going to have SEVEN artifacts in play?! SEVEN! I'm being facetious, of course, but we like to rationalize our decisions around here, tempering them with theoreticals that more often than we'd like come back to haunt us. Was affinity the burn that will keep us away from the fire from now on? I'd like to think so, but anything can happen around here.

I do believe, by the way, that there is a great deal of skill required to play affinity decks well. Granted, if no one is prepared for them, a random pile of affinity cards can overpower a bad deck, but in a field full of artifact hate it takes a ton of skill to pull out win after win. The mechanic was bad, but it isn't as mindless as many of its detractors would have you believe.



Great article. I feel it's a pity it's now too late to do anything about it, but it was a good read anyway, and I agree with your synopsis. In fact I said from the start that artifact lands had to go. I even had this discussion with some of the higher level Wizards reps in Australia, when the whole Skullclamp issue was blowing up.

Anyway, on to your article. I think the major point that you missed was that the presence of affinity makes a whole slew of other deck types unviable, due to "splash damage". for example, cards like Soul Foundry, Panoptic Mirror, Clearwater Goblet, Staff of Domination, Proteus Staff, etc... are all great cards, and just begging to spawn an archetype. Unfortunately, you cannot currently build a deck that relies on single artifacts as there is too much artifact hate being played in maindeck and sideboard. What it means, in effect, is that 90% of the interesting cards printed in this block became instantly unplayable in competitive Magic.

I think R&D did a fantastic job on designing some amazing cards this block. But they all became unplayable the moment artifact lands and affinity for artifacts became printed, because the hate necessary to beat that deck meant the death of any other original deck with an artifact base.

I think it's a shame that so many fine cards are going to waste.

**Cheers,
Nik Smith
New Zealand.**

Nik,

The phenomenon of which you speak is more the product of an artifact block as a whole than that of the affinity mechanic or artifact lands. With so many good artifacts in the environment,



there was bound to be a top-tier artifact deck running around, if not more than one. In reality it turned out to be Ravager Affinity, but it theoretically could have been a Myr deck, or a Sunburst deck, or an Ironworks deck. As long as one artifact deck was really good, players would have been packing artifact destruction. With any reasonable amount of hate in the environment, Soul Foundry and other slow cards like that would have a hard time ever making a dent in Constructed.

Were Soul Foundry printed in a set like *Mercadian Masques* in an environment where main-decking cards like Detonate would have been suicidal, it might--*might*--have been able to make an impact. But even in that world people were playing Disenchant, which would make for an awful lot of two-for-ones against the Foundry.



A victim of its times?

I take great comfort in knowing that all those cards you mentioned are being used to their fullest potential in casual games all over the world.

Regarding "That Card Again":

This was a great article. I had always thought the designers and developers in the early days of Magic had little idea what they were doing, but this article showed me how much they were thinking. It's great to see articles like this now since the Magic community was too unsophisticated to generate them at the time. You should do more theme weeks like this.

But come on now, with Onslaught block in the environment you can't say that Viridian Shaman and Goblin Sky Raider are "functionally identical" reprints...

--Mark S. Cipolone

Hi again, Mark,

The *Ice Age* guys were thinkers, no doubt about it, even if their metagame and ideas about good decks and cards seem a little silly to us now. **Magic** has always been handled with care by very intelligent people.

And you're right about how new creature types can make an old card a lot better (or worse). We use the term "functionally identical" in a very strict sense, though, especially when talking about reprinting old cards. Looking at the Reserve List now, I see that the real definition of "functionally identical" includes subtype. So I was wrong there.

The poll at the end gave three choices, and although The Werefrog could not determine what else could have been included for a poll of that purpose, The Werefrog would like to clarify why The Werefrog chose "A necessary evil," as opposed to the other two choices.

The Werefrog don't think that all cards should have functionally identical cards in place. This is because of T1 formats. If a deck were able to run three versions of Llanowar Elves, then the deck essentially has 12 of that one card in it. Couple that with good card-drawing, of which green has a bit, then one has large amounts of mana rather quickly on a more consistent basis than before.

Sure, this is good for the green player, but the age of the game would require at some point that each deck in the vintage format would run 8, 12, or possibly even 16 versions of a single card in them.

However, flavour should rule out function in this case if no one can think of a way to change Llanowar Elves to fit the new set, and The Werefrog won't suggest it here because then you couldn't read the rest of the thoughts The Werefrog shall give you. However, The Werefrog do find the tweaked reprints slightly superior as they require some thought in older formats.

Lastly, so few people voted that they would lower the power of Frogmite because they know that The Werefrog would protect that card. They know better than to risk the ire of The Werefrog.

Thank you for your time,

The Werefrog

The Werefrog,

Aaron agrees that Aaron's poll choices were less than ideal last week, and that another option between "A very cool thing" and "A necessary evil" was needed.

Aaron also agrees that R&D needs to watch making new versions of tournament-caliber cards with new names because of their impact on formats like Extended and Type 1.

And One Last Letter...

I'm wondering if you can help resolve a small disagreement about the current status of White in the colour pie. I recently had a thread closed on another site's message boards for, essentially, merely suggesting the possibility that a card like Armageddon or Cataclysm might make it into 9th Edition. The reason given was that "Neither card is in flavor for [White] now, and there is no way either will be reprinted."

Have you or anyone else with inside knowledge actually said this anywhere? The last word I remember on the subject was your article from about a year and a half ago, where you clearly stated that Armageddon could come back someday and that the idea behind it was definitely still in White's flavour. Has something changed since then, or is this still true? (I'm not asking if 9E will actually contain either card, which you probably couldn't tell me anyway, I'm just asking if your statements about the color's philosophy are still an accurate reflection of your views and/or those of R&D.) I'd appreciate knowing if this can still be taken as an accurate statement of R&D's current stand even if it's only for my own edification.

--Jeff Heikkinen

Jeff,

Sorry you're taking beats, bro. Armageddon is still in flavor for white (as are all symmetrical mass destruction spells). Red, being the best color at land destruction, also can destroy all lands, and we've been focusing on red's ability to do so a lot more lately. Armageddon and Cataclysm could both see the light of day again sometime, although exactly when is still up in the air.



That's it for the letters this time... keep writing them, and I'll answer what I can.

For those of you going to GenCon next week, I'll be there demoing our new **GIJoe** TCG (the other game I work on besides **Magic**). The game comes out today and is a blast! Stop by the booth and say hello, and give the game a whirl.

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