

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com

Ask Wizards - April, 2005

Ask Wizards
Friday, April 1, 2005



Do you have a question about **Magic: The Gathering** or **Wizards of the Coast**? Send it, along with your name and location, to us via this [email form](#). We'll post a new question and answer each day.

 Search Ask Wizards

April 29, 2005

Q: "I read every week's Top 8 deck qualifiers, and I never found a European Top 8 qualifier, except Grand Prix. Why?"
--Arnaud
Belgium

A: From **Greg Collins**, event coverage producer for [magicthegathering.com](#):

"When we debuted the Top 8 PTQ decklists for the [Extended season](#) (qualifiers for Pro Tour-Philadelphia), we limited our scope primarily to U.S. PTQs as an experiment. But as the project went on (and grew in popularity), we decided to throw open the doors for tournament organizers around the world to submit their Top 8 decklists. Now in the [second season](#) (feeding into Pro Tour-London), you've seen decklists from European PTQs in Colchester, Edinburgh, Kent, and Cork, along with other international PTQs in Fukuoka, Sao Paulo and Santo Domingo (plus a slew of U.S. cities). Expect to see the feature continue for future PTQ seasons, and if you're at a PTQ, be sure thank your organizer for helping share the decklists with all the readers on [magicthegathering.com](#)."

April 28, 2005

Q: "Is there an actual flavour text writer with the name or nickname 'Bucky'? (*Unhinged...*)"
--Andrew
Brampton, Ontario, Canada

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

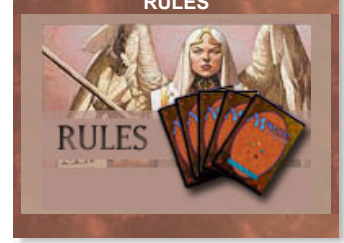
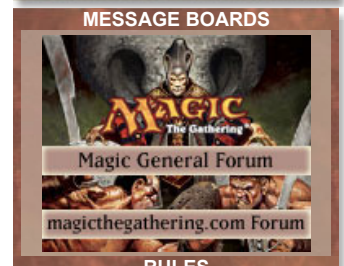
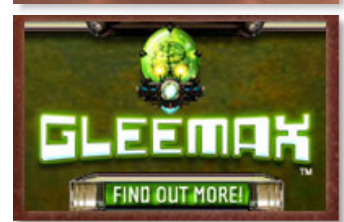
"Thanks for the question, Andrew. Bucky is the creation of none of than Mark Gottlieb. I think, and this is between just between you and me Andrew, that Mark modeled Bucky after himself. Come on -- snarky, irreverent, a bit of an ego...sure sounds like the Mark I know. Anyway, Mark initially created Bucky to help us explain a disconnect between the art and mechanic on '[When Fluffy Bunnies Attack](#).' I wasn't long after Bucky's creation that the other *Unhinged* writers began to use him in their flavor text. Soon we had more than a handful of submissions from our imaginary writer. Here are the three pieces of his that made it onto cards; '[When Fluffy Bunnies Attack](#)', '[Pygmy Giant](#)', and '[Pointy Finger of Doom](#).'"

April 27, 2005

Q: "Did you guys hire a new person for the Card of the Day on April 4th? From that point on it seems like a different person writing, and he/she seems to be focusing on only the flavor aspect of the cards. Perhaps you are just giving new orders to the same author, but I liked the tidbits from the other guy better."
-- Devin J.

A: From **Monty Ashley**, Managing Producer for [magicthegathering.com](#):

"Good eye! Yes, while Scott Johns has been away [increasing our reader base](#), I've been covering Card of the Day for him. Since the beginning of [magicthegathering.com](#) in 2002, the Card of the Day feature has been home to all sorts of tidbits and factoids, from pure flavor ([Dauthi Trapper](#), Card of the Day for Tuesday, March 19, 2002: 'The flavor text for the Trapper is interesting because it mentions two other obscure cards: Dandân and Rag Man.') to behind-the-scenes ([Mulch](#), Monday, April 26, 2004: 'Originally intended as a reprint in *Odyssey*, the effect proved too powerful in combination with threshold.') to pure commentary ([Leaden Myr](#), Thursday, September 25, 2003: 'The five common mana Myr in *Mirrodin* are strictly better than [Manakin](#) from *Tempest*. Not that anyone's complaining.') Rest assured that the recent spate of flavor-centric Cards of the Day does not represent a permanent shift in that direction."



April 26, 2005



Q: "It's amazing to me how many different concepts you come up with for world-building all of **Magic's** blocks and sets. How do you come up with so many very different ideas?"

George
London, England

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

"Um, thanks, George. There's no secret source of our ideas. We do what I imagine most creative professionals do: we read books, magazines, and comics, we watch movies and TV of all kinds, we play games. And all that stuff becomes a kind of creative compost in our brains from which cool world ideas (hopefully) grow. There's also a lot of staring into space and smacking our heads on the keyboard waiting for inspiration to come.

"It deserves mentioning, though, that the creative aspects of **Magic** are the result of a highly collaborative process. There's no one person that originates or drives everything. Sure, someone has to have the idea that gets things rolling, but seldom does the eventual result resemble that first idea. Card designers and developers, the art director, the concept illustrators, the card illustrators, the card name and flavor text writers ... all these folks shape the world as they flesh it out, and none of us know exactly what it's going to look like until very late in the process."

April 25, 2005



Q: "What is the relationship between the *Revised Juggernaut's* flavor text and the *Darksteel* version please?"

Sjoerd
Eindhoven, Netherlands

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

"Thanks for the question, Sjoerd. I'm glad you noticed the similarity between the two pieces. We wrote the *Darksteel* flavor text as an homage to the original *Juggernaut's* flavor text. Many of us have fond memories of *Juggernaut* -- he was quite the powerhouse in his day. We were glad to be reprinting him and wanted to pay tribute to the original somehow. That's as far as the relationship goes. There is no linkage in the story; the two pieces of flavor text are not referring to the same *Juggernaut*, for example. The *Darksteel* piece is simply meant to be a funny, goblinized version of the original."



April 22, 2005



Q: "In *Hero's Demise*, is that *Sensei Golden-Tail* in the picture?"

San Francisco, CA

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

"Dear San Francisco,

"No."

(We liked that answer. However, Brady also included this more informative answer:)

"The short answer is no, that's not **Sensei Golden-Tail**. The longer answer is that the challenge of this card's illustration was to represent the death of a legendary-looking creature without implying that a particular character was actually dying. In other words, we wanted to show the death of a legend without it seeming like a story point. Your question tells me we didn't succeed as much as we'd hoped.

"Here's the meat of the art description: 'Show a white-aligned fox or human, samurai or noble, male or female, being 'erased' in whatever way you think is coolest -- blowing away like ash, consumed by dark energy, pulled into the earth by little shadow creatures, whatever. The figure being affected should look legendary, one of a kind.'"

April 21, 2005



Q: "I went to the prerelease of *Betrayers of Kamigawa* and got the promo **Ink-Eyes**. I recently went to a Friday Night **Magic** and in one of my boosters, I found another Ink-Eyes though this one had different artwork, so I was wondering why the change in artist since the prerelease and the street release?"

--James
Gloucester, England, UK

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

"At a prerelease, you receive a rare promo card that is foil with unique artwork. The only place to get this version of the card is at the prerelease, you will never see this version of the card in a booster pack. The promo card is a reward we like to give to our players for coming out to see our new **Magic** set."

April 20, 2005



Q: "I was just looking over the sketches of **Braids** and **Chainer** and I noticed that they both had prominent tattoos on their arms. Was there some significance to either having them or the particular patterns?"

--Gary
Hanover, NH

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

"There's no significance in the tattoos or their patterns, Gary. **Braids** and **Chainer** were both 'dementia summoners,' black-mana-aligned wizards who could summon creatures directly from their own nightmare. The graphical look of the dementia summoners was created by Matthew D. Wilson, who gave them lots of black leather, buckles, and tattoos to symbolize their mentality."

April 19, 2005



Q: "Why did they ban **Arcbound Ravager** in addition to the six artifact lands? If **Arcbound Ravager**'s power was due greatly to the artifact lands, then what could be the reason for banning them at the same time and not letting time tell whether banning both is necessary? After all, doesn't Wizards ban as few cards as possible?"

--Jeff
Jena, Louisiana USA

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

"**Arcbound Ravager**'s power was greatly increased by the artifact lands, but it is still powerful without them. As I said in my article '[Eight Plus One](#),' we found it was still possible to build a Ravager Affinity deck without artifact lands that was at a troublesome power level.

"We do always ban as few cards as possible; that number just happened to be eight last time around."

April 18, 2005



Q: "I have a *Seventh Edition* Chinese **Drudge Skeleton** with a different picture to the English version. Have other non-English cards got different pictures?"

--Max
Shanghai, PRC

A: From **Worth Wollpert, Magic R&D:**

"We actually change art a little bit all the time because of the Chinese government's restrictions on media (overtly sexual or violent illustrations and human skeletons are not allowed). Some other examples of cards that have distinctly different art solely for Chinese release are: **Raise Dead**, **Scathe Zombies**, and **Coffin Puppets**. There are many more cards with little tweaks here and there, see if you can find more!



"Hint: Stick to looking at mostly black cards, and you'll fare better."

April 15, 2005



Q: "I've seen MaRo in his chicken suit, but when do we get a peek at him in the donkey suit he wore to GenCon SoCal last year?"

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

"Since you asked so nicely, here you go."



Mark Rosewater in a donkey suit, Gen Con SoCal 2004

April 14, 2005



Q: "I noticed that **Old Man of the Sea** is a creature type Marid. A search on [Gatherer](#) shows that no other creatures share its type. No other sources, dictionary or other, has been able to help me determine what a Marid is. Perhaps you could shine some light on the subject?"

--Jeff

Tacoma, Washington

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

"Marid is an old Arabian word meaning 'rebel,' and is used interchangeably with 'djinni' in Islamic folklore to mean 'evil spirit.' So why does the word appear on the **Old Man of the Sea** card? Because the **Old Man of the Sea** isn't a man at all, but rather a djinni straight out of one of the tales of *The Arabian Nights*. Here's a link to ['The Fisherman and the Jinni.'](#) translated 150 years ago by Sir Richard Burton."

April 13, 2005



Q: "Is there a reason that each new block starts in the fall, rather than at the beginning of the year, since it would be easier to remember each year associated with each block?"

-- Brian

Arkansas, USA

A: From **Michael Turian**, **Magic** R&D Intern:

"There are a few reasons that a block starts in the fall instead of at the beginning of the year. We all know that school isn't as fun as **Magic**. So what could be better than the newest set starting up right at the same time as school? This way when you come back from vacation and get back together with all of your friends, you will be able to play an all new **Magic** set. Second, we all know people want fun stuff to buy/receive during the Christmas season. An October release allows us to have our new block showcased during the Christmas shopping season. Lastly, there is history working for it. The first block, *Ice Age*, was released over the Summer of 1995. The whole idea of 'blocks' was still new to **Magic**. The *Mirage* block was realigned to be released in Fall 1996 and the schedule hasn't changed since."

April 12, 2005



Q: "Looking back at *Mirrodin*, the 'plane of metal' theme made for a very interesting story, but I never understood how the Sliths fit, though they were certainly interesting creatures. What were the Sliths exactly?"

--Benjamin

Lansing, Michigan USA

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

"Most of what we know about the [slith](#) is in their flavor text, Benjamin. They incubate in the **Great Furnace**, and their form and function is determined by which sun is overhead when they're born. Among all of Mirrodin's denizens, the slith were the first to fully adapt to life on the metal plane, and their adaptations were the most extreme. Also, like almost all beings on Mirrodin (with a few notable exceptions, such as the myr and the blinkmoths), slith are not native to the plane but were brought there against their will."

April 11, 2005



Q: "Flavor-wise, what are the Myojins? What makes them so different from the other spirits (like say, the Kodamas) that they have indestructibility (as long as they have a divinity counter) and really powerful abilities?"

--Mark
Philippines

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

"'Myojin' literally means 'bright divinity.' It's a Shinto word that denotes a kami of particular importance. In *Champions of Kamigawa*, the [myojin](#) are special because they are the kami of the five colors of **Magic**. For example, the *Myojin of Night's Reach* is black mana, and all black-aligned kami are aspects of her."

April 8, 2005



Q: "Regarding the restricted list for Vintage, I have the following question: Why is **Regrowth** restricted but **Eternal Witness** not restricted? Isn't **Eternal Witness** better than **Regrowth**?"

--David
Austin, Texas, USA

A: From **Nate Heiss**, **Magic** R&D Intern:

"Each extra mana in a casting cost makes a card significantly harder to abuse. Also, since **Eternal Witness** stays on the table and doesn't go to the graveyard, it makes graveyard recursion loops tougher to pull off. In some ways, the advantage of being a creature helps avoid powerful infinite combos from showing up. While **Regrowth** has proven itself too good in Vintage, **Eternal Witness** has yet to earn that merit badge."

April 7, 2005



Q: "I've noticed that a couple of Kamigawa block cards' flavor text have words that are unitalicized (like on **Uproot** and **Eerie Procession**). Why is this? Is it a mistake, or what?"

-- Skyler
Arlington, Texas, USA

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

"No, it's not a mistake. The flavor text on these two cards use italics for emphasis. Because the flavor text is already in italics, the emphasized words are set in roman (normal) type. Only a couple of cards per set get this kind of treatment, which is why you may not have noticed it before.

"We arrived at the battlefield too late. *Again*. Another error on your part, and you will have to answer to me personally."

--General Takeno, letter to the imperial mapmaker

"In **Uproot**'s flavor text, the italics show just how exasperated Takeno is. That 'again' is an emotional outburst from someone who usually keeps his emotions in check. I can almost hear him grit his teeth.

"Though in years past speculation was not encouraged about the strange ways of the kami, now we *must* understand their motivations, if such is even possible to the mortal mind."

--Lady Azami

"In **Eerie Procession**'s flavor text, on the other hand, italicizing the 'must' tells the reader what Lady Azami is really trying to say. It's as though she's pounding her fist on the table. Try reading it again with the emphasis on 'speculation' or 'motivations.' Changing the emphasis changes the meaning.

"Italicizing text in printed materials is just like using all caps for emphasis in an email or a message board post: It's a useful tool, but it quickly loses its effectiveness when overused."

April 6, 2005



Q: "Do you plan on making more non-connected 'blocks' or was Kamigawa just a stray from the pack? If you are making them non-related, why not let the players vote on a common theme for a new set? :-)"

--Tim
Woodstown, New Jersey

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

"I'm assuming by 'non-connected' that you mean 'themed non-mechanically.' Will **Magic** have other sets like *Champions of Kamigawa* where the theme of the block is something other than a mechanical tie (such as the Japanese theme of this year)? Of course we will. We are constantly striving to find different ways to tie our blocks together. The reason we tend to have most years revolving around game mechanical themes

(multicolor, tribal, artifacts, etc.) is that these themes tend to make good gameplay and create interesting environments. That said, I think you find that we have some very interesting surprises for you in the block themes of our next few years."

April 5, 2005



Q: "Have there ever been any women to compete in the Pro Tour? I have been trying to keep up with the latest tourneys, but have never seen a female compete in the tour. Thanks!"

-- Kris

Tacoma, Washington, USA

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

"There aren't a lot of them, but there are some women who compete on Tour. For example, Kate Stavola and Alana Burman both competed in the most recent Pro Tour (in Atlanta). There have been women in Top 8's of Grand Prix on occasion as well (highlighted by a second-place finish by Michelle Bush at Grand Prix-New Orleans, and more recently Stavola followed up her fifth-place finish a year ago at Grand Prix-Columbus with an eighth-place performance as a member of Team Doombot in Chicago). However there is still one barrier that has not yet been broken. No female has ever won money at a Pro Tour event. The highest finish ever was Clementine Bagieu, who finished 51st at the very first Pro Tour, but that event only paid out to the top 32 places."



Stavola, left, and Burman faced each other at Grand Prix-Chicago.

April 4, 2005



Q: "In what order do the **Magic** novels take place chronologically?"

--Brian

Marble Falls, Texas, USA

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

"That's a sizeable question, Brian. Here's how I think the order goes."

- *The Thran*
- *The Brothers' War*
- *Planeswalker*
- *Time Streams*
- *Bloodlines*
- *The Gathering Dark*
- *The Eternal Ice*
- *The Shattered Alliance*
- *Rath and Storm*
- *Mercadian Masques*
- *Nemesis*
- *Prophecy*
- *Invasion*
- *Planeshift*
- *Apocalypse*
- *Odyssey*
- *Torment*
- *Judgment*
- *Onslaught*
- *Legions*
- *Scourge*
- *The Moons of Mirrodin*
- *The Darksteel Eye*
- *The Fifth Dawn*

"The place of the following books in the timeline is not known or has not (yet) been specified:"

- *Arena*
- *Whispering Woods*
- *Shattered Chains*
- *Final Sacrifice*
- *The Cursed Land*
- *The Prodigal Sorcerer*
- *Ashes of the Sun*
- *Song of Time*
- *And Peace Shall Sleep*
- *Dark Legacy*
- *Tapestries*

- *Distant Planes*
- *Jedit*
- *Johan*
- *Hazon*
- *Outlaw: Champions of Kamigawa*
- *Heretic: Betrayers of Kamigawa*
- *Guardian: Saviors of Kamigawa*
- *Assassin's Blade*
- *Emperor's Fist*
- *Champion's Trial*
- *The Colors of Magic*
- *The Myths of Magic*
- *The Dragons of Magic*
- *The Monsters of Magic*

April 1, 2005



Q: "How do you decide who answers what question for Ask Wizards?"
 - Billy Zoom
 Boston, MA

A: From , Head **Magic** Designer:

"Billy,

"That's an interesting question. I cannot speak for all of the respondents but I can talk about R&D as I'm the guy who assigns the questions for R&D (this includes the designer and developers and the creative team).

"For each question I try to find the person who I think is closest to the area of the game in question. Curious about a piece of art, who better to answer your question than Jeremy Cranford, **Magic's** Art Director. Have a question about *Betrayers of Kamigawa's* development? Who better than the Lead Developer of *Betrayers*, Henry Stern. Wondering where a weird card came from, I'll track down the designer.

"As you can see, we strive to make 'Ask Wizards' as direct to the source as possible."



[Submit a question](#) to Ask Wizards



[Ask Wizards](#) archive

