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Fond Memories

*Brian David-Marshall
The Week That Was
Friday, June 3, 2005*



With Pro Tour-Philadelphia well into our rearview mirrors, the summer season of Regionals, Nationals, and Grand Prix yet to start and the next PTQ season still three weeks away, this past week allowed for some quiet reflection on the game and how it has affected so many lives.

This weekend marks the 10-year anniversary of Neutral Ground, the tournament center I founded in 1995 with my wife Karla and two partners, Jim Perricone and Glen Friedman. The last original partners sold off their interest in the store in 2001 to pursue other opportunities, but the store is still a fixture of the New York **Magic** community. Sometimes it seems that I spend more time there now than I did when I owned the place.

There will be a 10th anniversary celebration this weekend on Saturday, June 4 from morning until night. I will be there, as will countless personalities from the store's past. If you are in New York, you should swing on by and say hello.

It is hard to imagine that it has been 10 years since Steve and Dan O'Mahoney-Schwartz walked through the doors as our very first customers. I cannot even begin to list all the people who have passed through those doors since and touched my life in a very meaningful way. I just want to take a moment to thank everyone who keeps Neutral Ground going today – Matt Blank, Tony Rodriguez, and all the staff members. I can't imagine the New York **Magic** scene without it.



The O'Mahoney-Schwartzes were the first customers at Neutral Ground.

Former store manager Ben Bleiweiss has shared many stories from the store's past in his Blogg Fanatic column but there are still plenty more to tell. One that stands out for me in particular involves Zvi Mowshowitz.

The original location of the store was around the corner from its current space on the ninth floor of a building on 7th Avenue that has long since been converted into multi-million-dollar living spaces. The elevator that took you up into the store would let you out right in the middle of the retail area. There was no hallway or foyer or anything like that. You stepped off of the elevator and right into Neutral Ground.

Zvi was an early customer who played in our Grand Melees and Type 1 tournaments. He had one pretty expensive deck with an assortment of black-bordered power cards and that was pretty much the only deck he would use. He lost the deck and announced that he would no longer be playing **Magic** and disappeared back into the competitive Chess scene from which he had emerged.



Zvi's road to glory started at Neutral Ground.

Now, Zvi was not even close to becoming the **Magic** celebrity he would become during the ensuing years. He had yet to write his first article for the Magic Dojo that would launch him to deckbuilding fame, and the Pro Tour was still looming somewhere in the not-so-distant future. Zvi was pretty much just this offbeat teenager with very distinctive laugh who wore shorts in the dead of winter. It was almost a year after Zvi had announced his "retirement" and a couple of regulars were hanging out in the retail area shooting the breeze.

Someone mentioned a story involving Zvi but could not recall his name. He described the shorts-clad laughter who had lost his Type 1 deck and I remembered him instantly. I answered his question and mused, "Zvi Mowshowitz, I wonder what ever happened to him?"

Even as the words were escaping my lips, the Neutral Ground elevator slid open and out popped a puzzled Zvi who had decided to try his hand at the professional **Magic** scene.

"Yes?" he giggled while we all stared at him in shock.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Unfortunately, not all of my reflections this week have been so joyous. Christophe Weyers, one of the key figures in the European **Magic** scene, was killed this past Friday in a motorcycle accident. As the European Event Manager for Wizards of the Coast, Christophe was responsible for overseeing the European Grand Prix circuit (which regularly sees in excess of 1,000 attendees per event).

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I do not normally travel to European Grand Prix events but I did have the opportunity to experience one unique event that Christophe managed. In February of 2000, I traveled with Eric Kesselman and Brook North to Cannes, France for one of the first team Grand Prix events. We made Day Two and were somewhat overwhelmed when we discovered that the second day's competition would be taking place in a castle on the Island of Sainte-

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Marguerite, sitting in the middle of the beautiful blue waters off Cannes. This was not just any old castle, mind you -- it was the castle that served as a prison for the mysterious Man in the Iron Mask.

That site was the most fun I have ever had playing **Magic** and made quite an impression on everyone who attended that tournament. Christophe, thank you for making my first trip outside of the United States such a memorable experience. I am sorry I never got to know you better.

Since I did not know Christophe as well as many others within the **Magic** community, I will step aside to allow those who knew him best to explain the impact he made on their lives and the game that brought them together.

"For myself, what I recall the most fondly about Christophe is his upbeat demeanor and his drive to be happy and do entertaining things in all circumstances," said Chris Galvin, vice president of Organized Play. "Christophe worked outrageously hard in intense spurts, as events people are prone to do. Yet he was always on the forefront of people who, after a long hard day, was also the person mustering everyone else to go out to a club or even just the hotel bar.

"I remember quite fondly the Sunday night after GP Cannes. We grumbled about it at first, but we all enjoyed it. He will be missed."



*Weyers touched many lives through **Magic**.*

Hélène Bergeot, the European Category Marketing Manager, worked closely with Christophe.

"There are no words. No words, just this feeling of emptiness. Christophe has left us. Christophe has been much more than the European Event Manager, not only to us, but also to the **Magic** community. He had this amazing talent for improvising and finding creative solutions. He was gifted too for communicating with all the people he was in contact with (colleagues, event staff, and players). He brought us his passion and his energy – turning each event into a unique and memorable experience. This is what was made Christophe so popular. This is also how we want to remember him.

"Stoffel, we miss you."

Rather than closing with a firestarter topic this week, I encourage anyone who knew Christophe and was touched by his passion for the game to take advantage of the forums. Please use this space to share your memories of this unique individual who will be sorely missed, not only by those who knew him but by the thousands upon thousands of players who may not have known him directly but experienced his hard work, creativity, and enthusiasm on the European Grand Prix circuit.

Hall of Fame Update

Ever since Randy Buehler dropped a line about Hall of Fame inductees receiving lifetime Level 3 benefits when he announced the Pro Players Club, there has been a steady buzz about how the Hall of Fame will work and who will be inducted. It is not secret that a Hall of Fame committee has been selected and that the process has been moving forward, but even committee members have not been privy to the precise details of the Hall of Fame process.

If you tune in to this site on Monday, you will be treated to a rare article by Chris Galvin detailing the future of the **Magic: The Gathering** Hall of Fame. It will delineate exactly which players are eligible to be inducted, introduce the Selection Committee, and open the floodgates of debate until the first class is determined.

Early Rotation for Pro Tour-Los Angeles

In talking about the upcoming Extended Pro Tour, I have continually stated that the format for the event would be synched up with the Online Extended format initiated by the release of *9th Edition*. As it turns out, the dates for [Pro Tour-Los Angeles](#) fall about two weeks shy of the official rotation. The format to be used at Pro Tour-Los Angeles will be "Rotated" Extended.

"Rather than have the Pro Tour feature a soon-to-be obsolete format, the DCI has decided to let the format for Pro Tour-LA be rotated Extended two weeks before it is mandated by the floor rules," said DCI Program Manager Scott Larabee. "The format will include all expansion sets from *Invasion* forward, and all base sets from *Seventh Edition* forward. Although *Ravnica*, *City of Guilds* will be released by the time of the Pro Tour, it will not be included as it will not yet be Constructed-format legal."

*Brian David-Marshall has been involved in **Magic** since 1994 when he was violently shaken by someone searching for the game. He has organized tournaments, run a store, and is currently the Pro Tour Historian. His latest venture is [Top8Magic.com](#), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.*



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