

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Decking the Hall

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Making Magic
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Several weeks ago, [the feature article](#) was written by Organized Play Vice President Chris Galvin about the introduction of the Pro Tour **Magic** Hall of Fame. In it, he explained how the first five honorees would be inducted. A key component of that process is a vote by sixty-nine hand-selected members. Each member selects five names from the list of twenty-eight. The votes are public and the top four vote getters will earn the very first invitations into the Hall of Fame (the fifth invitee will be selected by the group of Pro Players with a total of 100 or more Pro points).



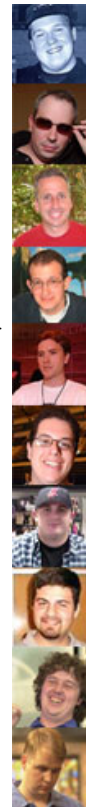
I happen to be one of those sixty-nine hand-selected members and it is my job to make public my votes. As I write a weekly **Magic** column, this seemed like the best place to reveal my five votes. In addition, I thought this would be a chance to give a little behind the scenes about the Pro Tour to let all of you into a piece of the game's past. But first let me ask the most pressing question:

Why Should I Care? (The "I" In Question Being You My Readers)

A little under a year ago, I wrote a two-piece column called "On Tour" (link to [Part I](#); link to [Part II](#)) where I recapped the Pro Tours from past to present. I got very mixed mail on the columns. While some players liked the insight into the Pro Tour, others complained that I was off-topic. The Pro Tour, they claimed, has nothing to do with the design of **Magic**. Popycock I say. You heard me. Popycock!

As I've explained many, many times, I see the game holistically. That is, I don't look at it as separate parts but rather as one intertwined organism. All the pieces fit together to create a whole far greater than the parts. The Pro Tour is a vital part of the game. Here are just a few things that would not exist (or not exist at their current level) if not for the Pro Tour

- Flashback and splice** – Both of these mechanics were inspired by games I watched while judging the Feature Match area.
- The current R&D team** – R&D has made great strides in improving the quality of **Magic's** design and development mostly by using the Pro Tour as a resource for finding R&D members. Randy Buehler, Aaron Forsythe, Henry Stern, Brian Schneider, Matt Place, Mike Turian, Worth Wollpert, Nate Heiss. Without the Pro Tour, **Magic** R&D would probably not have found any of these guys. Trust me when I say it would have been to the detriment of the game.
- Other sections of the company** – Do you enjoy *Magic Online*? Most of its card programmers were found through the Pro Tour (Alan Comer being the most famous example). Enjoy [magicthegathering.com](#)? It's edited by a former Pro Player (Scott Johns). And was edited by a different one before that (Aaron Forsythe).
- The play/draw rule** – Designed by Pro Tour Player and Wizards employee Matt Hyra This rule was created out of a desire to better balance tournament play at the PTQs.
- Magic Web Sites** – The greatest impetus of material in the early days of The Dojo (the first major **Magic** web site, whose influence carries through today) was PTQs and Pro Tours. While the material has broadened out over the years, the fodder provided by covering the PTQs and Pro Tours helped cement the online community in its earliest days.
- Design and development advancement** – The reason I used to go to every Pro Tour was that I found the information available at them to be invaluable for design. Randy has said the same is true for development. Seeing the best players in the world tackle different formats is very enlightening. And often, the lessons help spur new ideas. The revamped legend rule, for example, came out of a conversation between myself and pro player Zvi Mowshowitz at Pro Tour Venice.
- Tournament software** – The Pro Tour has been the pioneer at generating tournament software.
- Judging quality** – The Pro Tours have become the key place to train up-and-coming judges.
- Magic celebrities** – No program we run has had a bigger impact on public awareness than the Pro Tour. Even if you've never read a single tournament report or followed any coverage, you should know names like Jon Finkel and Kai Budde.
- Mainstream Press (aka Legitimacy)** – "Hey we've got a cool game" doesn't get reporters' attention. "Hey we've got a cool game and we're giving away millions of dollars" does. The same could be said of things people say to legitimize **Magic** in the eyes of non-**Magic** players.



I don't believe players can just split apart the pieces of the game. Even if you never set foot inside a tournament, the existence of the Organized Play structure, spearheaded by the Pro Tour, has had very real impact on how you play and enjoy the game.

In addition, I think it's important to recognize the value of history. What makes **Magic** more than just a game is the metagame that surrounds it. When you pick up the magical cards, you're not just playing a game. You are partaking in an experience far greater than yourself. You are becoming part of a much greater whole. And the Pro

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Tour and its history, which of course includes the people involved, adds an important layer to that overall experience.

If after all that, you still don't care, see you next week. But if you're at all interested in what I value in the game's history, please stick around.

Skaff's Big Idea

Longtime readers of my column should recognize the name Skaff Elias. He was one of **Magic's** original playtesters and was a key part of R&D for many, many years. Among his many contributions to the game was the Pro Tour. Yes, Skaff is the one who said that what **Magic** needed was something, or better yet someone, for the **Magic** player to aspire to be. Just as the NBA makes kids want to play basketball, so too could the Pro Tour make players want to become something more.



My timing at the company proved perfect as far as the Pro Tour goes. I arrived just as the initial planning was being put together for the first Pro Tour. I had some judging experience so I asked to be the R&D liaison to the Pro Tour. I was quite happy (although not surprised, as no one else in R&D asked) when I was told I could. At the time, there were two main fears we had. One, what if the Pro Tour demonstrated that the game was more luck than skill. (We believed the game was predominantly skill, but if anything was going to prove us wrong, it would be something like the Pro Tour.) Two, we were worried that the Pro Tour might not have enough characters. How charismatic could people be who sat around staring at the cards in their hand?

The Pro Tour would go on to prove both fears unfounded. If anything, the Pro Tour demonstrated how much skill there was in the game. And the colorful characters came pouring forth. Which brings us to the task of the day. Who deserves the honors of being one of the first inductees?

It Ain't Easy

Before I select my picks, let me start by saying that this is a daunting task. There are over ten people on the first ballot that I believe deserve to be in the Hall of Fame. In fact, there are over ten people that I believe will definitely get into the Hall of Fame (the optimist in me wants to hope they're the same people). The question for the first year is not who deserves it, because many people deserve it, but rather who deserves to be inducted first.

R&D has been having quite a number of conversations on the issue and I have found that each person (the ones voting that is) identifies what the criteria means in their own unique way. I guess this is a good time as any to bring up the official company line on what the voters are looking for:

Voting shall be based upon the player's performances, playing ability, integrity, sportsmanship, and contributions to the game in general.

It is left to the voter to interpret and evaluate those criteria as he or she sees fit. My take is this. I see the Pro Tour as being a great wealth of history. As I explained above, the Pro Tour's influence on the game of **Magic** is enormous. My votes are going to the players who made the Pro Tour what it is. Yes, for the first year's inductees I have decided to stress historic relevance. I believe that the first people inducted should be the ones that defined the game's history. So without further ado, here are my choices:

Vote #1 – Mark Justice

In the history of the Pro Tour, I believe there have been four players that spent any significant amount of time as "The Man". Being The Man means that at any one moment in time, you are the universally acknowledged best player in the game. You are the player that no one wants to face but everyone dreams of defeating. You intimidate players merely by your reputation. And you have a track record that backs up the hype. Mark Justice wasn't just The Man, he did it first.

At the very first Pro Tour, I did interviews with thirty or so of the top players. One of my questions was, "Who do you want to meet in the finals?" Everyone but two players named Mark Justice. Defeating Mark in the finals of PT I was everyone's dream.

But the icing on the cake was the fact that I watched Mark play. A lot. In his hey day, he wasn't just good. He was awe-inspiring. I watched him win games that seemed to everyone but Mark to be unwinnable. I watched him make decisions ten, twelve, fifteen turns in advance. And he did it all with a sense of style that had to be seen to be believed. I believe Mark's natural talent for the game has been matched (and exceeded) only by Jon Finkel.



Later in his career, Mark did have some dark days. And I'll be the first to admit *World Championships '96* that his integrity score took a beating. But to me, the Hall of Fame is, well, a hall of fame. A place to record the highlights of the Pro Tour. Mark Justice in his prime is definitely to me one of those highlights.

Vote #2 – Olle Rade



Olle, showing off his Invitational card at PT Boston '02

Mark had to pass on the mantle to somebody. Who would have thought it would have been a tiny Swede? I consider Olle Rade to be the first Pro Tour Superstar. Mark came into the Pro Tour a known quantity. The Pro Tour made Olle. Almost overnight, Olle went from being a nobody to being one of the power players of the Pro Tour. In his first year, Olle won a Pro Tour, placed Top Four at Worlds, made a third Top Eight, won the first Invitational and won the first Pro Player of the Year. This might not seem so impressive in light of later accomplishments but at the time it was unheard of.

Many years ago, I was putting together a list of famous Pro Tour firsts for the *Sideboard* magazine. What was interesting was how many were done by Olle. And I have a great respect for firsts. The person who breaks new

ground is paving the way for all those that follow. Olle, for instance, put Europe on the map for high-level play. At the time, the Pro Tour was dominated by North Americans. Taking the mantle of The Man made a bold statement that **Magic** was becoming an international game.

I feel that the first inductees have to represent key moments in the development of the Pro Tour. As such, it feels wrong not to include the “Littlest Viking”.

Vote #3 – Jon Finkel

Jon Finkel was the third player to pick up the mantle of The Man. And boy did he run with it. In many ways, Jon wasn't just a star. He was a super star. He is the only player who I expect to get a unanimous showing among the voters (and to any voter that doesn't vote for Jon – stop gaming the system – shame on you). I don't know if I need to write too much about Jon. He is the most naturally gifted player the game has ever seen. His accomplishments are rivaled by only one other man (the fourth person to become The Man – he's not eligible until year three but I'll pledge my vote for him now).

On top of that, Jon made the game fun. (I apologize for the past tense, but most of the things I'm talking about happened in the past; but Jon, don't let that keep you from showing up for all the Pro Tours you'll forever be invited to.) Jon understood his role and always was happy to oblige. He even took the time to sign all the kids' autographs. A nice guy, a great player. My third vote. (Note that these votes aren't in order of importance.)



Finkel, after winning the 2000 World Championships in Belgium

Vote #4 – Darwin Kastle

I've always been a fan of the unconventional thinker. And there are few players on the pro Tour more unconventional than Darwin. But not only is Darwin unconventional. He actually wins. It's easy to miss the fact that Darwin trails only Jon Finkel and Kai Budde in final day appearances and lifetime Pro Points. He has the streak for the longest consecutive attendance (49 in a row!) and managed to have a money finish (and quite often a Top Eight appearance) for the first eight seasons (only Dave Humpheries has a better record with nine seasons – although not in a row).

Many of my others pick represent a key moment of time. Darwin is here for the opposite. Darwin's never been number one. But he's often been number two. And historically, he's number three. That's why he's my vote, number #4.



PT Houston '02

Vote #5 – Mike Long

And now we get to the vote most likely to spurn angry letters. Yes, I'm voting for Mike Long. Yes, I understand that he scores lowest on integrity of the twenty-eight candidates. But he scores number one in a very important category – charisma (that falls under player performance for those criteria sticklers). Mike Long has done more than any other player in the history of the Pro Tour to make it interesting. When Mike was involved, everybody cared. Sure they were all rooting for him to lose, but man did they care.

Mike made the Pro Tour exciting. He made it tense. He made it interesting. More interesting than any other player on this list. (And the list has several key standouts in this



US Nationals '02

area.) No matter how you criticize him you have to acknowledge that he is a fundamental part of the game's past. To deny him entrance into the Hall of Fame is to misunderstand what the Hall of Fame is all about. It's not a place to highlight just the good of the game. It's a place to highlight the history of the game. And Mike is a key part of that history.

Six Through Ten – See You Next Year

This process was hard; *very* hard, because as I said earlier more than ten people deserve the honor. (To those that didn't get my vote, I can only hold out promise that I'll rectify that for four or five of you next year.) But it was fun. I always love reminiscing and this honor has given me the chance to look back and see how far the Pro Tour has come. I'm quite excited to see how the Hall of Fame balloting turns out.

Join me next week when I talk about how little things mean a lot.

Until then, may you know the joy that comes from embracing the past.

Mark Rosewater

*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he's in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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