

Matthew Vienneau, Pro Tour Player/Hall of Fame Candidate

Editor's note: Over the course of the voting, we will occasionally be posting ballots of voters who wish to make their choices public, along with any additional analysis they used to come to their decisions. If other Selection Committee members wish to provide analysis and explanation of their votes for publication, click [here](#).



Others have said it already and others have said it better, but after spending six weeks struggling with my decision I couldn't resist the chance to share the reasoning and criteria I used when selecting my five candidates for the **Magic** Pro Tour Hall of Fame.

All the other voters have mentioned the difficult choices and it's true, but I loved being part of the process. It's incredible to be on the Selection Committee and get the opportunity to weigh all the arguments and make these decisions. I think the Hall of Fame is a great idea and I'm glad to contribute.

I do have one exception to general sentiment – I don't wish I had more votes. I'd like to keep the Hall of Fame so exclusive that it won't have me as a member. Five votes almost seems like too much – I'm tempted to do a Charlie Catino and just vote for Finkel and walk away.

Originally I wanted to emphasize attributes that might allow me into the Hall of Fame one day – contributions outside of the game. As one of only three nominees that are also on the Selection Committee, I'd like to think that I've made a fairly significant contribution outside of the game over the past 10 years as a judge, writer, critic and supporter of the game. But have I done enough to make up for the little mistakes I make at so many events? I don't think so (and unfortunately everyone else on the Selection Committee agrees with me – someone show me some love!) And after reading the comments and ideas of others, I decided that as a Pro Tour Hall of Fame it has to be about the Pro Tour, not about the writing and popularity. Give me another 100 Pro points and I might get my hopes up, but for now I'm just content to be nominated.

Popularity naturally leads us to Mike Long. At first I strongly considered Mike because he's just so darn charismatic and he's a fantastic tactical and strategic player. But I've decided that I won't nominate anyone who has been suspended at any point in his or her career. If the Selection Committee consistently rejects players who have been suspended, then maybe it will force players with aspirations to the Hall of Fame to think twice when they face that moment of temptation. Even the aura of dishonesty is costly on my ballot. If a single person decides not to cheat because they don't want to risk entry to the Hall of Fame, then I think it's worth it.

Longevity was also important to me. Two friends of mine, Paul McCabe and Terry Borer, were fantastic players in their day as they each won a Pro Tour and had a second Top 8 in their first season on the Pro Tour (after dominating the Juniors and Finkel the year before). But they didn't stick around. Other things caught their attention. I decided that anyone who didn't have the commitment to play in at least 25 Pro Tours in 10 years (roughly half) didn't have the history to accurately showcase their full abilities.

An argument was made by some that picks should be based on who we want to see back on the Tour. Some even argued that votes for Wizards of the Coast employees are a waste of prize money. I think this is a ridiculous position and gave very little consideration to the prizes and privileges of membership. Some of the best and brightest players have gone on to make **Magic** better by working for Wizards, are we to punish them for this decision? The Hall of Fame is not a tool for claiming additional prize money from Wizards' coffers. I do however, feel that players without the appropriate respect for the Hall of Fame should lose points, a factor that further diminished Mr. Long's chances with his infomercial response to the Hall of Fame quiz. I also wasn't a big fan of people asking for votes and claiming they "deserved" to be in the Hall of Fame.

In the end I decided to emphasize ability over everything. Reputation was also important as was historical importance and longevity, but if you didn't average at least six Pro points per event, then this wasn't going to be your year.

Here are my five picks for the **Magic: The Gathering** Pro Tour Hall of Fame:

1. Jon Finkel

As everyone else has indicated, Jon is in a class by himself. Not only for play skill, but also for his willingness to act as the poster-boy for **Magic**. Not for him the mocking "barn" of some of today's young stars when talking to newer players. My only issue with Jon is that despite working toward an English degree throughout much of his **Magic** career, he rarely wrote about the game. His casual attitude toward the game made everyone jealous, but we couldn't deny him the vast respect for his intuitive abilities.

2. Darwin Kastle

Three hundred and twenty Pro points is a lot of points. Although Darwin and I made our first Top 8 together back in Atlanta, he's had a lot more to do on Sunday since then. While never quite achieving the fame of peers such as Jon, Randy, or Kai, Darwin's rugged dedication to gaming and the ability to average over six-and-a-half Pro points per event through almost 50 events clearly shows that he belongs in the class of 2005.

3. Tommi Hovi

I've always liked Tommi and for many years after he won his second Pro Tour I always picked him for my Fantasy Drafts because I was convinced he was too quiet and thus unappreciated as a player. Unfortunately he was forced to stop attending events to fulfill army duty requirements (I believe) and I can only imagine the numbers he would have been capable of had he been able to dedicate more time to the game. I'm happy to see everyone else realizing his talents and I look forward to seeing him back in the game.

4. Alan Comer

When I first played Alan in 1997 at a side tournament in Paris, I thought he was some wacky English guy who would be easy to beat and I was wrong about almost everything. He surprised me then but he also made it fun. And he continued to surprise people and make it fun for the rest of his career. While my singular experiencing team-drafting with Alan made me promise never to do it again, I cannot deny that playing with or against him, it was always enjoyable. The pleasure he takes in playing **Magic** is infectious and I feel he should be rewarded for that enthusiasm, not to mention the many Top 8s and his contributions to **Magic Online** and deck building over the years.

5. Rob Dougherty

Originally I was going to go with Mike Pustilnik because of his obvious delight in all things gaming, but he just didn't have the numbers to justify a second "because he's fun/sportsmanship" vote on my ballot. But the more I read about Rob Dougherty, the more I realize that he too personifies many of the things I'm looking for in a Hall of Fame member, and he has the numbers to back him up. I believe my early misgivings were due to the length of time it took for Rob to start making Top 8s (his first wasn't until 1999) and a misconception that his points were mostly due to team events (he actually has four individual Top 8s, though his Limited game could use some work). Rob is one of the few people on the ballot that I've never played **Magic** against but he's always struck me as the kind of person I'd like to see representing the game.

I look forward to next year,

Matthew Vienneau

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