

## Brian David-Marshall, Pro Tour Historian

*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](#).*



I want to start this ballot off with a nod to all the Neutral Ground and Gray Matter guys who were eligible on this ballot. From the pre-Pro Tour days of the Gray Matter circuit through the halcyon days of Neutral Ground, there were a handful of players who make my memories of that time special.

Steve O'Mahoney-Schwartz, Dave Price, Chris Pikula, Mike Pustilnik, and, of course, Jon Finkel comprise the ballot I would love to cast today but with one obvious exception – that is not the ballot I am going to cast.

This is the first ballot for the Pro Tour Hall of Fame, and as such I feel a need to cast my ballot for players with an exceptional level of accomplishment. Much has been made of the comparisons between Cooperstown and the Pro Tour Hall of Fame, so you could say I was looking for my equivalent of 3,000 base hits or 500 home runs – a sort of exclusive statistical club.

I set the bar at five Pro Tour Top 8 appearances. There are only 14 players with that on their resume and seven of them appear on the inaugural ballot. The first player to accomplish that feat was Olle Rade at Pro Tour-Rome '98 (with Jon Finkel hot on his heels, as he would join the Quint Squad one stop later in Los Angeles.) The most recent addition to the Quint Squad roster is Masashi Oiso, who will not be HoF eligible until the year 2012.

Here are the candidates who have achieved five Sunday appearances:

### 1. Jon Finkel

The trouble is, I only have five votes – or rather four votes since Jon is a no-brainer. Jon stands head and shoulders above the rest of the first-year pack with more money than the two players behind him on the cash list combined. There is not much that can be said about Jon that has not already been said on everyone else's ballot. Jon was great from the crack of the starter's pistol. He played in the Junior division of the very first PT and finished fourth.

At the very end of that season he gunned for the older competition at Worlds 1996 and finished ninth. He remained a remarkable presence on the Tour for as long as he chose to play and reached the Top 8 in better than 20 percent of the Pro Tours in which he played. Look for the Random House book chronicling his card-playing career later this summer. Not kidding.

I love Charlie Catino's ballot, which ensures that no one but Jon can be unanimously inducted in this very first year. It is a nice trick and there is no need for anyone else to do it. If we used Jon as the standard for Hall of Fame induction, we would end up with three members between now and 2012. Onward.

### 2. Darwin Kastle

This is a tough vote for me. I wanted to put Dave Humpherys ahead of Darwin – even if it meant bumping Darwin from contention – based on the deterioration of Darwin's game toward the end of his career. I heard some other voters mention the possibility of leaving Darwin off their ballots and I have since decided that would be a travesty.

Just look at his results. He has eight Sundays with five of those advancing him to the Top 4. Only Kai and Jon have more Sunday appearances, and there is nobody within one Pro Tour of his number below him. Kastle is one of eight players with double-digit Top 8 finishes in Grand Prix as well.

I was finally convinced of the ludicrousness of keeping Darwin off the ballot by reading a recent column that suggested Rafael Palmiero should be kept out of Cooperstown despite his 3,000 hits and well over 500 home runs – putting him in an elite club with Mays, Aaron, and Murray. The suggestion that someone who has accomplished what Palmiero has done in his career does not belong in the Hall struck me as dumb and suggested to me that the writer's sanity should be called into question.

Darwin has accomplished things in this game that few others have been able to and deserves to be inducted in the first class. Darwin's career had been declared dead before his most recent Top 8 in Houston – he could still surprise us again.

### **3/4. Rob Dougherty/Dave Humpherys**

I have gone back and forth on these two players, trying to figure out their place in the seven possibles for my ballot. At least one pundit has suggested that voters should not vote for all three YMG members but these three players were at the core of the game's most dominant team for the bulk of the Pro Tour. The trio dominated Team Limited until Phoenix Foundation arose and permutations of the three have posted dominating Constructed Pro Tours on at least two occasions – New York '98-99 and Houston 2002.

Rob is among a small handful of players who have laid claim to the title of World's Best Deckbuilder and, had the category existed during previous Invitational elections, would certainly have earned the elusive invite he covets as Resident Genius. He gets additional points for contributions to the game as the founder of Your Move Games, as well as being a respected writer and tournament organizer.

Dave does not have the extracurricular credits that pepper Dougherty's resume. Instead he has simply been one of the most consistent players on the Pro Tour year in and year out. His median finish in 47 Pro Tours is 52nd, which means he made money more than half the time he played on the Tour. Despite have three fewer Sunday appearances than Kastle, he is still only \$3,000 behind him in all-time winnings.

### **5. Olle Rade**

Olle was the first great player who made you realize that **Magic** was a game of skill. He is the first player to crack the Quint Squad. There have been some critics who point to his land-light, 64-card spider deck that he used to win Pro Tour–Columbus as some evidence against his induction, but can you imagine what the other decks must have looked like?

There was a brief time when Rade was the only player with five Sunday appearances under his belt. He won the first Pro Tour event he played in and had accumulated his fifth Sunday by his 14th event. I consider Masahsi Oiso to be a first-ballot Hall of Famer based on the impressive results he has posted over the last few seasons, and Olle's are even more impressive.

### **Left out: Scott Johns and Alan Comer**

My last spot was very tricky. There are significant cases to be made for both of the remaining Quint Squad players. Alan Comer and Scott Johns were dominating players in their day and make serious contributions to the game every day in their roles at Wizards of the Coast. It would have been harder to keep them off the ballot had they not been Wizards employees, since they're not eligible to play in events and my not voting for them won't be contributing to taking slots and appearance fees out of their pockets in the immediate future.

Both Alan and Scott very much deserve to be in the Hall of Fame and I hope they get there next season. I won't be voting for them, though – my ballot is going to be Bob Maher, Dave Price, Chris Pikula, Steve OMS, and Mike Pustilnik.

I think.

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