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# Thirty-Two Short Columns About Dwarves

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Making Magic  
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## Carving Out Their Own Niche

Long before **Magic** ever saw the light of day, such masters as J.R.R. Tolkein, Gary Gygax and Walt Disney defined many of the basic principles of what exactly it means to be a dwarf. Short? Check. Like digging underground? Check? Good at building armor? Check. The interesting question (for a column on **Magic** at least) is what has **Magic: the Gathering** added to the mythos of dwarves. Here are some of the juicy tidbits.

- Dwarves (along with monkeys) have an unnatural hatred for non-basic land.
- Dwarves really enjoy blowing stuff up.
- Dwarves have some anger issues.
- The Mohawk is a viable dwarf haircut.
- Dwarves are willing to say the word "butt".
- Dwarves have some odd hold over barbarians and minions.
- Dwarves have ponies.
- Dwarves will make armor out of children's toys.
- Dwarves apparently like rutabagas.
- Dwarven warriors and nomads tend to perform the same functions.
- Dwarves perfected the "blaze of glory" (whatever that means).
- The dwarves have vigilantes, bomb squads, strike forces, thaumaturgists and sea clans.
- Let's just say the dwarven men need not have any fear that anyone's moving in on their women.
- They can kick the Goblins of the Flarg's butts (remember, dwarves can say "butt").

## What is Paka's Deal?

The following is my description of **Dwarven Miner's** flavor text from my column "[The Write Stuff](#)" (from way back in March 18, 2002). I've added in some commentary ([in blue](#)). A quick reminder: here's the card.



I have a silly side. (Shocking, I know.) While *Unglued* had a chance to let this side of me shine, there are only a few places in tournament **Magic** where I've let down my proverbial hair.

[This is actually a blantant lie.](#) Apes of Rath, Squee's Toy. "I want a banana this big!" "Boom!" Every squirrel in **Magic**. I let down my hair all the time.

Norse and Tolkien mythology established dwarves as miners. They like to burrow through the ground. Then it dawned on me that gophers also burrow through the ground. Wouldn't it be funny if I treated dwarves like they were gophers?

[Gophers, by the way, are just naturally funny.](#) Not real gophers mind you. The idea of gophers. I had a gopher invade my lawn once and it was annoying. But the concept of a gopher is comedy gold.

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(See the movie *Caddyshack* if you need further proof.) The key to making dwarves funny (and by that I mean funnier, they already start kind of funny) was to hitch their wagon onto the comedy that is gophers.

From time to time writers grow irrationally attracted to something they've written. I don't know why, but this piece cracked me up. So much so that I got it into the set by sheer willpower. You see, in comedy, there is a little chart about how much of something is funny. It goes something like this: A little bit is funny. A bit more isn't funny. A lot more gets funny again.

This is true. See my column "[Mons Made Me Do It](#)" for more on this. Come on, it's Dwarf Week, how can I not reference my column from [Goblin Week](#)? (See, little red guys are funny.)

My plan was simple: I was going to hammer the flavor text team with this joke until it reached the third stage. So I referenced the joke every chance I got. After a few weeks of the team wanting to kill me, the joke finally got funny again.

This same technique also works with designing cards.

A few notes about this quote. I chose the name Paka because it sounded like a peasant name and it had the right beat to it. I used the term pestridder because it was the best made-up fantasy way I could come up with to say exterminator. And I chose rutabaga because it's a funny vegetable.

I forgot to mention what is probably the funniest word in the whole flavor text: again. This is what takes the card from being just funny to being, in my mind, a classic. The beauty of this line isn't that it's out of the ordinary but rather in this world it happens all the time.

Quick aside -- back in my stand-up days, we played a game called "Not Funny, Funny, Very Funny." The way it worked was that one person would name a topic, such as vegetables, and another person would have to name three items. The first would have to be not funny. The second had to be funny, but not too funny. And the third had to be very funny. So for vegetables, the game would go like this:

Vegetables!  
Not Funny -- Corn  
Funny -- Eggplant  
Very Funny -- Rutabaga

Let's try one more topic:

Animals!  
Not funny -- Bird  
Funny -- Cow  
Very Funny -- Platypus

Feel free to play with your friends.

I could have taken this section out as it doesn't have much to do with the flavor text, but when I reread it I decided it was cool enough to stay.

Join me for Pyromania Week when I talk about the flavor text for [Reparations](#).

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## The Dwarven Berserker Speaks Out About Dwarven Image

"Ever notice that you never see a happy dwarf in **Magic**? Or a sad one? Or even one that shows any emotion whatsoever? Except, of course, anger. 'Cause The Man knows that every dwarf is just a pissed off little dude. We're all small uncontainable bursts of anger. Ooh, watch out. Don't piss us off. We'll threaten to beat you up. Or blow something up. Or hit you with some object made of fire. That is if we're not busy digging a hole or building armor. Of course, even those two tasks we still seem to do angrily. Heaven forbid The Man ever show anything about the dwarves other than the little niche he's carved out for us. The world would collapse if we weren't your little spitfire comic relief puppets. It makes me angry. And I know The Man's loving that."

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## A Little Game

Of the thirty-two dwarves in **Magic**, twenty-one of them have their name begin with Dwarven. This little quiz is to see if you can remember which is which. Match the Dwarven \_\_\_\_\_ with the expansion/base set it first appeared in:

- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Armorer         | a) <i>Alliances</i>      |
| 2) Berserker       | b) <i>Alpha</i>          |
| 3) Blastminer      | c) <i>Apocalypse</i>     |
| 4) Driller         | d) <i>Fallen Empires</i> |
| 5) Demolition Team | e) <i>Homelands</i>      |
| 6) Patrol          | f) <i>Judgment</i>       |
| 7) Sea Clan        | g) <i>Odyssey</i>        |
| 8) Strike Force    | h) <i>Onslaught</i>      |

- 9) Vigilantes
- 10) Weaponsmith

- i) *Visions*
- j) *Weatherlight*

The answers: (click [here](#) to reveal)

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## An Elaborate History of Dwarves in Competitive Constructed Tournament Play

I think I saw a **Dwarven Miner** in the Pro Tour Feature Match area once. (Okay, okay, Scott Johns did lose his chance to become World Champion of 1998 when **Dwarven Thaumaturgist** and a **Dwarven Miner** took him out in the final game of his quarter-final match against Ben Rubin. Really.)



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## My Life as a Dwarf, Part I

One of my common themes in "Making **Magic**" is using my personal life as means to underscore the point of a particular column. Today, we're talking about dwarves. So I felt it would be fun to share with all of you an aspect of my past which I feel helps me have a little understanding of what it means to be a dwarf.

I'm not a tall man. In fact, I'm the shortest member of R&D (it's been getting worse as all our hires seem to be getting taller and taller). I come from a small family. My parents were small and my kids are small. I even married a short woman. But before puberty, I wasn't just small. I was *uber*-small. I was the smallest kid in my class. Not the smallest boy. Oh no. There was one girl in my class who was the tiniest thing you'd ever seen. She played Tinkerbell in our production of Peter Pan because the scale wasn't too far off. She was taller than me.

I was so small that people assumed I was two to three years younger than I actually was. Every time I did something as a small child, people would clap because they thought I was some prodigy. Luckily children, especially boys, are pretty kind-hearted and don't feel a need to ostracize others based on something as silly as physical appearance. I've been told that sarcasm is difficult to read in print. THAT WAS SARCASM! During recess in the winter in my formative years, I used to play a little game called "Keep Away From The Bigger Kids" (and by bigger I don't mean older, I mean bigger). It wasn't really my idea. I was kind of drafted into the game. The idea was that the bigger kids would try and catch me so that they could roll me around in the snow. (A quick aside – I am currently employed in my dream job with a wonderful family while the guys that chased me are probably working a mind-numbing job to pay off their several alimonies so be aware that karma wins out in the end.)

The lesson here? I understand why dwarves have such a gruff demeanor. They don't want to play Keep Away From the Bigger Kids. They'd rather play Touch Me and You'll Have a Pick-Axe In Your Forehead. And while I don't have the demeanor (or the pick axe) of a dwarf, I think I have a little understanding of what being one of the little ones means.

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## Ask a Dwarf

*How many goblins could you take in a fight?*

**Balthor:** Dead or alive? I mean me.

**Bloodfire Dwarf:** Six. Maybe seven if they're small.

**Dwarven Patrol:** Ten to twelve.

**Dwarven Thaumaturgist:** Five.

**Pardic Miner:** Seven.

**Spark Mage:** Six.



**Bomb Squad:** Fifteen.

**Dwarven Berserker:** Thirty or forty.

**Dwarven Grunt:** One. If I'm lucky.

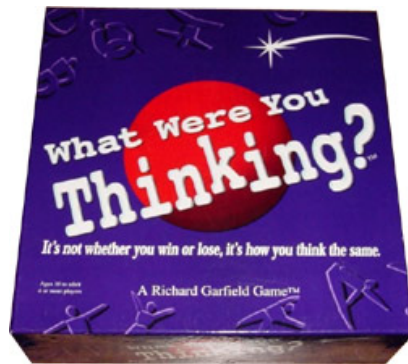
**Dwarven Vigilantes:** Nine.

**Whipkeeper:** Fourteen.

**Dwarven Scorcher:** Eight. Unless they're moggs, then maybe three.



## What Was Joe Thinking?



From time to time I like to tell stories not about the game itself but about the people behind the game. R&D stories if you will. As luck would have it, I have one of these stories that involves dwarves. One of the fun parts of being in R&D is you get to help playtest other R&D members' games. This story is about one of those times. This was many years ago back when Richard (Garfield) worked in the office full time (he still pokes his head in from time to time but this was when he worked at Wizards full time).

Richard wanted to design a family/party game. Inspired by a German game, he came up with a cool little game he called Hive Mind (it would later be released with the name What Were You Thinking – while Wizards no longer produces it if you can find a copy on ebay or see a used copy at a game shop, definitely pick it up). The idea of the game was this: you get asked questions and your goal was to write down the

answer that you thought matched as many other player's answers as possible. The key to the game is to try and guess what the group thinks is the most obvious answer.

Most of R&D was pretty good at Hive Mind but there was one glaring exception. His name was Joe Grace. While he didn't work much on **Magic** he is the person pictured on *Unglued's Timmy, Power Gamer* (Joe was the Timmiest member of R&D at the time).

For some reason Joe was bad at Hive Mind. No, bad is incorrect. He was abysmal. For some reason he just didn't have the gene that allowed him to group think. Yet, Joe constantly played the game because he wanted to show that he could pick up the skill. But the more he played, the more everyone realized it was hopeless. Which leads us to the last game of Hive Mind I remember playing with Joe.

The topic was Name Three Famous Dwarves (see, I told you this was on topic). Everyone wrote down their answers. Joe was smiling. Finally, he was convinced that he found the topic that was going to turn everything around for him. This topic, he had it. This was the game where he wasn't going to stand out. This time he was going to just be one of the crowd. Joe was so excited that he asked if he could read his answers first.

Once again, the topic was Name Three Dwarves. And the goal was to match the answers of all the other players. Joe pulled out his list. He even cracked his knuckles in a show of bravado. "Okay," he started, "Who's got Gimli?"



(As a quick postscript – the correct answers turned out to be: Dopey, Grumpy, Doc in that order.)

## The Dwarven Berserker Speaks Out About Dwarves and Land Destruction

"You ever wonder why us dwarves are so crazy about blowing up land? It isn't our choice. We were instructed to blow up land. You know why? "Cause The Man don't want us showing our faces in no tournament hall. You see, R&D goes on and on about how they have to make land destruction suck because no one likes to have their land blown up. So who better to put on the sucky cards than the little people? And you ever notice how every once in a while when they do make a good land destruction spell they conveniently never make it a dwarf? We can **ride a freakin' avalanche** if we wanted to. But no, The Man has to keep us down. He has to show us our place? On ten cent cards it seems."

## Ask a Dwarf

*Have you ever dated someone taller than you?*

**Dwarven Recruiter:** Yes

**Mine Layer:** Yes.

**Dwarven Grunt:** Yes.

**Dwarven Trader:** I don't exactly have a choice.

**Dwarven Scorcher:** Yes.

**Dwarven Miner:** Yes.

**Dwarven Berserker:** I don't date anyone taller than me.

**Dwarven Armorer:** Yes.

**Dwarven Sea Clan:** Aye.

**Liberated Dwarf:** Of course,

**Pardic Swordsmith:** Yes.

**Dwarven Lieutenant:** Yes.

**Dwarven Demolition Team:** Yes. Yes. Yes.



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## Expressions Unpopular With Dwarves

- "come up short"
- "short comings"
- "short sighted"
- "short tempered"
- "for short"
- "in short"
- "short for"
- "short of"
- "short end of the stick"
- "short films"
- "short people"
- "little people"
- "vertically challenged"
- "ground lickers"
- "low men on the totem pole"
- "small pickings"
- "small time"
- "small talk"
- "small good that'll do"
- "Smallville"
- "feel small"
- "a little"
- "little by little"
- "pick it up a little"
- "little importance"
- "tiny dancer"
- "Tom Thunb"
- "wee \_\_\_\_\_"
- "little fella"
- "knee high to a grasshopper"
- "below knee level"
- "dwarf short"
- "How's the weather down there?"
- "Would you mind shining my shoes?"
- "Oops, I almost stepped on you."

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## My Life as a Dwarf, Part II

Last time I talked about the physical dangers of being the smallest one around. Now let's get into the emotional ones. You'd think being small was so apparent that no one would feel compelled to point out how small you are. (If it's any consolation, I've had some very tall friends that inform me that they get the same treatment on the opposite end of the spectrum.) My height became a big issue to me because it appeared to be a big issue to everyone else. And while I understood that I was going to be teased by many of the other kids, I was not prepared for the same to be done by the adults.

You see, I assumed that the adults were supposed to be on my side. I was the underdog (by the way, I believe this led to my being a big fan of Underdog). Wasn't the authority figures suppose to help me? Aren't the adults supposed to act like adults? One would think. They seemed to find my height as funny as everyone else. Somehow picking on height doesn't get special harassment status. I mean, really, would these same adults pick on the fat kid? (Maybe they would – it just saddens me that kids can't rely on the adults to act maturely.)



But the worst of all of the adult tormenting was saved for a special evening. My first school dance. I think it was sixth grade (puberty decided to take its time for me – you know let me have as much short time as it could allow). To bring everyone up to speed that doesn't remember (or blacked out) sixth grade dances, it's a bit removed from what you might think of as a dance. (As I'm an old fogey, this might have completely changed, but this was how it was back in the day.) Most people don't have dates and the adults feel a great need to spur things on.

The dance was started by having a single couple dance all by themselves. Who, might you ask? Why the following entertaining couple: the shortest boy and the tallest girl. Yes, how better to start a dance than by embarrassing two people already socially uncomfortable. I did it because, well, I was told to and I wasn't what you would call a rebel. And as I was dancing with a girl over a foot taller than me, I remember fuming. It was bad enough that I had to put up with

all the everyday harassing. But public-sponsored school shaming? It didn't seem right. Who was supposed to follow us, the most acned boy and the girl with the flattest chest?

What does this have to do with dwarves? I understand why dwarves keep to themselves as a race. They're not that social. You know why? Because they know they'd end up dancing with the Cyclops girl.

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## The Dwarven Berserker Speaks Out About Beards

"You ever wonder why all dwarves have beards? 'Cause The Man don't want you seeing our face. But he's insidious. You know how he keeps us little folk in check? By making sure that every appearance of a dwarf in television or film appears with a beard – except one. This way when one of us wee ones tries to walk around shaven, he has to listen to several dozen comedians say 'Hey Dopey!'"

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## The Difference Between a Dwarf and a Midget

I know you're curious. Medically speaking a dwarf is a person of short stature (usually considered 4'10" or less) due to a medical or genetic condition. Dwarves are also characterized by a short overall stature with proportionally shorter arms, legs and trunk. A midget is a medical term for short people with proportionate arms, legs and trunk. The condition is caused by a hormonal deficiency.

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## The Dwarves That Almost Were

In *Mirage*, there was a card called Dwarven Scouts. It was a red card that made three red 1/2 dwarf tokens. What happened to it? This:



You see, we asked for "three dwarves sneaking through enemy territory" and we got this art. Upon seeing this I went to talk to the art director, then a woman name Sue Ann:

**Me:** Hey Sue Ann, have you seen the art for Dwarven Scouts?

**Sue Ann:** Yeah. You like it?

**Me:** Not exactly. I have a small problem with it.

**Sue Ann:** What?

**Me:** I actually brought the art with me so we could look at it. Here we go.

**Sue Ann:** I like what Geof did with the colors.

**Me:** My issue isn't with the art quality.

**Sue Ann:** Okay. Then what's the problem?

**Me:** This card is called Dwarven Scouts.

**Sue Ann:** And?

**Me:** Look at the picture. It's called *Dwarven Scouts*. *Dwarven*. Scouts.

**Sue Ann:** You don't think they look like scouts.

**Me:** No, I don't think they look like dwarves!

**Sue Ann:** Sure they do.

**Me:** No, no they don't.

**Sue Ann:** Those could be dwarves. You have to give the artist some latitude for his own spin on things.

**Me:** This isn't some made-up creature. Dwarves have a distinctive look.

**Sue Ann:** I think you're being a little too narrow in what you're willing to accept.

**Me:** Dwarves actually look like something. They have certain proportions. And they have beards. These creatures have no beards.

**Sue Ann:** Dwarves don't have to have beards.

**Me:** They do in **Magic** or basically any pop culture reference in the last century.

**Sue Ann:** Maybe in *Mirage*, dwarves look like this.

**Me:** You do understand that not only don't these look like dwarves they do look like something else in particular?

**Sue Ann:** What?

**Me:** Look at them.

**Sue Ann:** So?

**Me:** Their small, green, pointy ears.

**Sue Ann:** You lost me.

**Me:** How are you working on a fantasy game?

**Sue Ann:** Still don't know.

**Me:** They're goblins!

**Sue Ann:** I think they're dwarves.

**Me:** You think they're dwarves, and the artist thinks they're dwarves. The rest of the world doesn't think that. You know why?

**Sue Ann:** Why?

**Me:** BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT DWARVES! THEY'RE GOBLINS!

**Sue Ann:** To you.

**Me:** Well, yes to me. And you know, anyone who knows anything about fantasy. Like, say, our players!

**Sue Ann:** Well, the art's not changing.

**Me:** But... but we asked for dwarves.

**Sue Ann:** These are Geof Darrow's interpretation of dwarves.

**Me:** I can see I'm talking to the wrong person. I guess this isn't an art issue. Let me talk to the development team.

And that is how **Goblin Scouts** came to be.

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## Ask a Dwarf

*How realistic is Snow White and the Seven Dwarves?*

**Dwarven Berserker:** A fine woman like Snow White stays in a house with seven little dudes and no hanky panky happens? I don't think so.

**Dwarven Nomad:** They work all alone in a diamond mine and they have to shack up together in a tiny cottage in the middle of nowhere?

**Dwarven Bloodboiler:** Dwarves don't sing songs that geeky.

**Enslaved Dwarf:** Dwarves don't have stupid names like Sleepy and Sneezzy. Doc, maybe.

**Pardic Miner:** I thought it was quite realistic.

**Dwarven Thaumaturgist:** I didn't buy that Dopey character. I've never met a dwarf that can shut up for longer than thirty seconds.

**Dwarven Trader:** Grumpy reminded me of my dad.

**Dwarven Lieutenant:** Dwarves neither whistle nor walk in lines.

**Liberated Dwarf:** I cried at the end.



## Building Balthor

One of my favorite parts of design is trying to design to pre-existing criteria (restrictions, creativity, hmm). One of the most common types of cards that fall into this group is legendary creatures. Often, the story uses certain characters and we are asked by the Creative Team to design a card to match the character. Balthor, both versions, was one such task.



What set Balthor apart was the fact that we knew that he was going to die mid-way through the block and then come back in zombie form. It's not often you get to design two versions of the same legend at the same time. Ertai, Crovax, Kamahl... they all had their different cards designed at different times. But Balthor was showing up in two sets back to back. Here we finally had the luxury to do them together.

What did this mean? It meant that we were able to use the two cards to show a contrast of a character. Also, as the cards were linked creatively, the aesthetics of linking them mechanically was strong. We started by looking at the living version of him. The conversation went something like this: (I'm not one hundred percent who the Creative Team member was but I think it was Brandon.)

**Me:** So what can you tell me about Balthor?

**Brandon:** He's the leader of the barbarians.

**Me:** I thought he was a dwarf.

**Brandon:** He is.

**Me:** So he leads a band of barbarian dwarves?

**Brandon:** No, they're human.

**Me:** Then where are the dwarves?

**Brandon:** What dwarves?

**Me:** His dwarves. I mean, he's a dwarf. He's got to know some dwarves.

**Brandon:** No, he's been ostracized by the dwarves.

**Me:** Wow, ostracized by dwarves. That's got to be tough.

**Brandon:** I guess.

**Me:** So he's the leader of the barbarians. What else you got?

**Brandon:** Um, he kind of mentors Kamahl.

**Me:** Anything else?

**Brandon:** No.

**Me:** Okay, so I have to design a dwarven leader/mentor of barbarians.

**Brandon:** Basically.

(pause)

**Me:** Good to know.

The leading barbarians got me to the "All barbarians get +1/+1". The mentoring got me the barbarian power pumping. Then I turned my attention to the black version. The dead version got a little meaner. This plus the whole undead thing got us to black. To sync up the cards, I wanted to have a parallel construction. That is, I wanted Zombie Balthor (as he was called then) to give +1/+1 to some creature type and then have some way to affect that creature type.

For the first part, I stumbled on minions pretty quickly. It jived with the story and it made a lord for yet another race that didn't have one (the living Balthor was the first Barbarian lord). I tried a lot of activated abilities but none seemed to work. I went back to Brandon and got more story. This is where I got the idea of him being able to bring back his whole army. The original version just affected black creatures but as I looked at the two cards it dawned on me that I wanted to encourage barbarians and minions to hook up. This led to adding red to Balthor the Defiled's text. And thus a legendary dwarf was born, and killed, and reborn a second time.

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## The Dwarven Berserker Speaks Out About The Word Dwarven

"Have you ever stopped to take a look at all the names of dwarves in the game? Two thirds of it is Dwarven \_\_\_\_\_. What the...?! Like it's real important to make sure the name explains that we're dwarves. We're all

freakin' three foot tall with beards! I think the art might be able to handle explaining who we are. Want to know the real reason? 'Cause The Man don't like giving us names. He does't want to think about us as individuals. So look forward to more fun names like Dwarven Swordmaker and Dwarven Pissed Off Little Guy."

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## Paying Attention

What follows is a story about a game I played and how I won. Let me warn you before I begin that I believe this story will cause a schism. Some of you will think I made an excellent move. Others will think I was being a jerk. That's why it's cool that we have forums. So when you check in this week's thread feel free to discuss whether I earned an interesting win or just took advantage of a beginning player.

Anyway, here's the story. I'm playing a sealed game of *Mirage*. I get my opponent down to 6 life when there is a ground stalemate. Now, in my hand I have a **Skulking Ghost**. (For those unaware, it is a 2/2 flier that is sacrificed if it is ever targeted.) Three hits from the Ghost will win me the game. The problem rests in a lone dwarf on my opponent's side of the table. He has the card **Dwarven Nomad** (*Mirage's* version of **Dwarven Warriors**). Now **Dwarven Nomad** has a tap ability (to make creatures with power of 2 or less unblockable) that can kill my **Skulking Ghost**. So I keep the Ghost in my hand.

But as we continue playing, I get the sense from watching him play that he's not going to see the **Dwarven Nomad** play. So I play the **Skulking Ghost**. And as I had ascertained, I am able to hit him on three consecutive turns without him ever realizing that he had the solution to the problem sitting on the table. At game's end I thank him for a fun game and then point out his mistake.

The big question is this. Is gauging an opponent's play skill to figure out what will and won't happen on the board, good gamemanship or was I just being a jerk? Talk amongst yourselves.

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## My Life as a Dwarf, Part III

Dwarves are known for their poor anger management skills. But why? My contention is it has something to do with their height. (In psychology they call it a "Napoleon Complex".) And how do I know? Because it's happened to me.

In December of 1977, Randy Newman wrote a song parodying discrimination. He picked a trait that he thought was pretty innocent and then wrote a satirical song talking about how "horrible" this group was. The song was called "Short People." It had lyrics like "They got little hands; little eyes. They walk around telling great big lies" and "short people got no reason to live".

In 1977 I was ten. I wasn't ready for sarcasm. (Interesting note – sarcasm is one of the last types of humor for children to understand.) I thought he was just an evil man. How do you terrorize a short child? Why, give him a Top Forty song for everyone to sing to him about how horrible it is to be small. Adults too. (Can you tell this is a sore issue?) Let everyone in on the fun. I hated Randy Newman. I hated him more than I had at that time hated anyone. He wasn't some punk fifth grader. He was a famous singer. And if I'd been a volatile dwarf with a well-crafted sword, I'd have taken him out. ("Short people, Randy? No, *you* got no reason to live.") Luckily for all involved, I wasn't.

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## I cc: You're Busy

Dear Mr. Rosewater,

My name is Joklur. I'm the leader of the Dwarf Union. I guess it's my job to ensure that my people get proper and accurate representation in the game. Our concerns really come down to three basic issues:

1. Please don't play into the dwarven stereotypes. You know, angry little people that like to use forged weapons and fire to cause a ruckus and blow things up.
2. My people understand that the key to popularity is to appear on constructed level cards. While I clearly don't expect every dwarf card to be a Standard staple, I do expect that as a classic fantasy archetype that we would get our fair share of representation in tournament play.
3. Once again as a key fantasy race, I feel it's only appropriate to expect a minimum of three or more dwarves in every legal expansion.

I know other union leaders bug you incessantly. I don't want to do that (see, the stereotype of dwarf as crazed madman has no grounding in reality). I trust that you understand our issues and that you will ensure that each one is met with the care that you give the premier races.

Whole-heartedly yours,

Joklur

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## Ask a Dwarf

What's the collective term for dwarves?

**Dwarven Armorer:** Cluster of dwarves.

**Dwarven Vigilantes:** I don't know. Bunch of dwarves. Who cares?

**Dwarven Grunt:** Murder of dwarves.

**Dwarven Sea Clan:** Scurvy of dwarves.

**Pardic Swordsmith:** Fury of dwarves.

**Dwarven Recruiter:** Smack of dwarves.

**Dwarven Berserker:** Butt-kicker of dwarves.

**Dwarven Weaponsmith:** Shortage of dwarves?

**Whipkeeper:** A lot of dwarves.

**Dwarven Patrol:** Stock of dwarves.

**Bloodfire Dwarf:** Avalanche of Dwarves.



## Small Men Making It Big

There are currently thirty-two dwarves in existence (**Magic** cards not actual real life dwarves – there's more than thirty-two of them). Of them, which ones are the best designed? I'm glad you asked because it's time for **The Magic: the Gathering All-time Dwarf Top 10**:

### Number #10 – Dwarven Demolition Team

This card slid in at number 10 for having one of the best flavors of any dwarf. I mean when a wall is causing you problems, who you gonna call?

### Number #9 – Mine Layer

This card also makes it into the top ten for having excellent flavor that comes from the mechanic itself. The card also makes interesting choices for the opponent as the card always leaves each land with one last use.

### Number #8 – Bomb Squad

This card (designed originally for goblins) is about as silly as dwarves get. I love the flavor that the card lights the fuse and has to wait for the explosion to occur. This card also does something I like a lot in design in that it sets up a game state that forces players to react. Creature X, Y and Z have four turns until they explode. What are you going to do with them?

### Number #7 – Dwarven Weaponsmith

Wow, as I go over these cards it's interesting how many just have a cool flavor that works itself through to the mechanics. I like that this guy will make you armor out of whatever artifact you give him to work with. The Weaponsmith beat out the Armorer for this slot as reusing artifacts was just more flavorful than turning cards in hand into armor.

### Number #6 – Dwarven Thaumaturgist

As anyone in R&D can tell you, I do so love my power/toughness switching cards. While the ability started in black (on the *Legends* card *Transmutation*), it was this little guy that introduced this wonderful ability to red (who still has it by the way – although blue does get to swap its own power and toughness).

### Number #5 – Whipkeeper

Mechanically I like the idea that this card fluctuates greatly based on what else you are playing. If you have a lot of other sources of damage, this guy is great. If not, he's not so good. I really like cards that force players to make key decisions in deckbuilding as the card scales significantly based on what else is in the deck.

### Number #4 – Dwarven Patrol

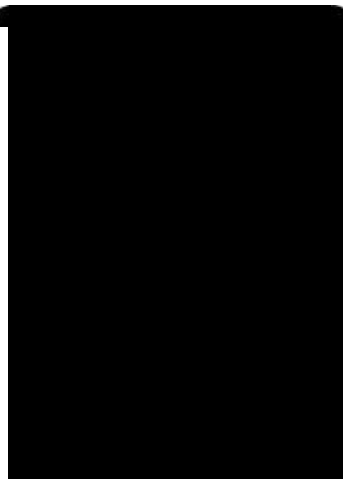
The Patrol made number four primarily because I think their drawback is amazing design. You can work with it but it's just not as easy as it seems at first blush.

### Number #3 – Dwarven Miner

The more I design the more I appreciate simple, elegant cards. It's hard to top four words of rules text. Also, this card really cemented this flavor into dwarves.

### Number #2 – Dwarven Vigilantes

This card is so fundamental to what it does that R&D slang for the ability (that you can essentially redirect your damage to another creature rather



than the player) is the "Vigilante ability". The card also has a lot of interesting play value.

### Number #1 – Dwarven Warriors/Dwarven Nomad

One of the great accomplishments in design is making a card that looks bad but is secretly good. Even harder though is making a card that seems good but is bad. Even harder than that is making a card that seems good but is bad yet still players really like it. I have no end of respect for how much goodwill **Dwarven Warriors** has done. When you first start playing, the card just seems so good. (A quick note for my more novice readers – pay attention, it really isn't as good as you think. I swear.) Yet as you get better you start realizing its weakness. And even then, you're still kind of tempted to play it. That my friends is great design.

## It's The Roles That Got Small

While the dwarves have often been an entertainment novelty due to their height for many years, they are not alone. Here are some other famous pop culture figures that share their pain:

- The Oompa Loompas
- The Munchkins
- The Ewoks
- Mini-Me
- Toulouse-Lautrec
- Gary Coleman
- Santa Elves
- Hobbits
- Leprechauns
- Danny Devito
- Webster
- Willow
- And, of course, Tattoo (from Fantasy Island)



## Hi Ho, Hi Ho!

Have you ever wondered how you would cast the seven dwarves if you only had to use specific dwarf cards from **Magic**. I sure hope not. But I have thirty-two columns to write, so I took a swing at it:

### Happy – Dwarven Weaponsmith

I chose the Weaponsmith because he was the only one who I could find smiling in the art.

### Grumpy – Dwarven Berserker

No one is more upset than the Berserker.

### Dopey – Dwarven Demolition Team

Look at the Alpha version of the art. It doesn't get dopier than that.

### Doc – Dwarven Thaumaturgist

This one was obvious. He's the only one you could even imagine calling Doc. Obviously a man of science.

### Sleepy – Dwarven Trader

This one was tough. I chose it because the woman in the art (who I can only assume is supposed to be the dwarf) seems the most sleepy of all the dwarves as picture in their art. Also, it's a vanilla 1/1. What else is it going to do if it doesn't sleep?

### Sneezy – Spark Mage

All I can say is look at the art. Gesundheit!

### Bashful – Dwarven Nomad

He's hiding. That's the best I could do.



## Why the Dwarves Really Hate the Goblins

I thought this might be the proper place to explain why **Magic** doesn't have more dwarves. It's the goblins' fault. No, really. (For a longer explanation of this, you might want to check out an early column of mine entitled "[Here's Looking at You Squid](#)". While on the surface it was about cephalids, - it was Cephalid Week after all – it was really about dwarves.) **Magic** only has so much space for the small humanoid creatures in red. And goblins just take up most of that space. *Odyssey* tried swapping the dwarves in for the goblins for a block and that didn't go over so well. The majority of players, it seems, love their goblins. And as we are ultimately in the business of giving all you what you want (up to a point – you guys occasionally want things that would ultimately upset you), we have chosen to keep goblins at a relatively high level (not all of the time, but most often). This doesn't mean you'll

never see a dwarf again (because you will) but be aware that when you do, enjoy them as they are never going to be as plentiful as the goblins.

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## My Life as a Dwarf, Part IV

Do you know the place where height is discriminated against the most? The place where I as a youth was most aware of just how short I was? The amusement park. Yes, only at an amusement park is entrance to something based solely on height. This a big problem for me because as a young child I loved roller coasters (having experienced the miniature kiddy ones). The problem was that I wasn't quite four feet tall and every roller coaster that didn't have bunnies painted on the side of it had a height requirement of four feet tall (and the real cool ones required a height of five feet – but that would be a later torment).

Most of you probably do not fear the clown. You know the two dimensional wood one that holds out his hand with a word balloon that says "You must be this tall to ride the <fill in the scary roller coaster name>. Me, I feared the clown (and let's face it clowns are scary to start with). The clown was my bouncer. The clown was the one that stood between me and fun. I hated the clown. Not as much as Randy Newman, but still enough to really matter.

How can a 3'11" boy ever hope of defeating the clown? The answer rested in western apparel. Yes, my key to roller coasters was none other than the cowboy boot. A simple inch heel was all I needed. And interestingly, roller coaster attendants never seem to ask why a young boy is wearing cowboy boots to an amusement park. I'm not sure if Gimli or Bashful ever had issues like this.

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## Ask a Dwarf

*How do you feel about non-basic land?*

**Dwarven Blastminer:** Can't stand it.

**Dwarven Demolition Team:** Is there a wall on it?

**Dwarven Miner:** Hate it.

**Liberated Dwarf:** I feel sorry for it.

**Dwarven Sea Clan:** We stay far away from land.

**Dwarven Scorcher:** Unless it's messing with me, I really don't give it much thought.

**Dwarven Driller:** Non-basic, basic. I hate 'em all.

**Enslaved Dwarf:** I don't really feel one way or another.

**Pardic Miner:** Do we have to talk about land? It brings up a number of issues for me.

**Mine Layer:** I don't cry a tear when it blows up. I can tell you that.

**Dwarven Berserker:** I see. You're talking to dwarves so of course you just have to ask about non-basic land. You just have to push our buttons, don't you? Oh look, the little man gets angry. Get away from me.



## It's Just a Matter of Time

Here are dwarf names I guarantee will see print sometime in **Magic's** lifetime:

- Dwarven Artillery
- Dwarven Artisan
- Dwarven Assassin
- Dwarven Berserker
- Dwarven Blacksmith
- Dwarven Brawler
- Dwarven Cadet
- Dwarven Captain
- Dwarven Commando
- Dwarven Cutthroat
- Dwarven Digger
- Dwarven Enforcer
- Dwarven Explorer
- Dwarven Farmer
- Dwarven Hero
- Dwarven Marauder
- Dwarven Mechanic
- Dwarven Mercenary
- Dwarven Pickpocket

- Dwarven Piker
- Dwarven Psychopath
- Dwarven Scout
- Dwarven Sharpshooter
- Dwarven Spy
- Dwarven Tactician
- Dwarven Thief
- Dwarven Tinkerer
- Dwarven Trailblazer
- Dwarven Tunnler
- Dwarven Vandal
- Dwarven Warlord
- Dwarven Wizard

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## The Dwarven Berserker Speaks Out About Dwarven Legends

"Did you know that the game of **Magic** has over three hundred legends? Three hundred! You know how many goblin legends there are? Six. Elf legends? Four. Snake people legends? Seven. Seven! Golem legends? Two. Cephalid legends? Freakin' humanoid squids. Two. You know how many dwarf legends there are? One. And he didn't even hang out with the dwarves. No, the one dwarf they promote to legendary status wouldn't even give his own people two words. And even him they had to kill after one expansion. 'Cause The Man can't be havin' no dwarves in his game. At least no high profile ones anyway. And don't give me no mouth about dwarves having two legends. Balthor alive, Balthor dead doesn't count as two. Barely counts as one."

---

## Little Known Facts

Whenever I attend a Pro Tour I run something called Question Mark, the **Magic** Game Show. It's basically a game show where contestants can win cash and prizes (minus the cash) with their knowledge of **Magic** Trivia. Here is a category that you might see in Question Mark:

**Small Talk (this category is about our wee little friends the dwarves)**

1. What dwarf has the most mana symbols in its mana cost? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Dwarven Bloodboiler (from *Judgment*). It has three red mana in its mana cost.**

2. What is the only dwarf to begin with a vowel? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Enslaved Dwarf (from *Torment*).**

3. What dwarf has the least amount of rules text? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Dwarven Trader (from *Homelands*). It has no rules text.**

4. What kind of tokens does Bomb Squad create? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Fuse counters.**

5. How many of the thirty-two dwarves in existence have the word "land" in their text box? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Only five (Dwarven Blastminer, Dwarven Driller, Dwarven Miner, Mine Layer and Pardic Miner).**

6. Who is the only dwarf wizard? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Spark Mage.**

7. What two dwarves have the exact same rules text with the exception of one word. ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Enslaved Dwarf and Liberated Dwarf.**

8. What is the only dwarf to have reminder text when it was first printed in an expansion? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Dwarven Blastminer (from *Onslaught*).**

9. What dwarf was reprinted the farthest away from its first printing? ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Dwarven Demolition Team. It appeared first in Alpha, Beta and Unlimited. It wasn't reprinted until *Eighth Edition*.**

10. Name all the other creature types that appear in the rules text of dwarves. ([click here to see the answer](#))

**Barbarians (Balthor the Stout), Minions (Balthor the Defiled), and Orcs (Dwarven Soldier).**

Score yourself:

8-10: Be sure to check out Question Mark if you're ever at the same Pro Tour I am. You have a chance of winning the whole thing.

5-7: Check out Question Mark. Not because you have any realistic chance of winning. You just could use the practice.

2-4: You might want to rethink that career in **Magic** trivia. To be blunt, you suck.

1: You think 2-4 sucked. You could only dream one day to suck merely as bad as them.

0: You don't even deserve a verbal thrashing. You sicken me. (Okay, you get a little verbal thrashing after all.)

-1: How did you even do this? You can't lose points. Man, you need help. Professional help.

i: Not only did you do the impossible but you have a decent amount of math knowledge for a screw-up.

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## Irony and Coincidence

This column started as a funny idea I had and grew into a monster. I spent more time on this column than I have on any other column I've ever written (there are a few that come mighty close though). Who would have thought that my column on dwarves would be the exact opposite of short? I hope you all liked the column and I'm very interested in feedback. Did you like this column? Dislike it? Like parts and hate others? Believe I am certifiably insane? All of the above? I'd love to know.

Now on to the coincidence. As I was finishing writing this column I realized that thirty-two has a meaning other than what inspired me (I'm sure the thread will point this out if you have no idea what I'm talking about – and no I didn't get the number wrong – *The Simpsons* was itself a parody). It turns out that there are exactly thirty-two dwarves in **Magic** right now. Freaky, huh?

Anyway, it's time to end call an end to this crazy column. Join me next week when I do something a lot less complicated.

Until then, may you find thirty-two facets to your own life.

Mark Rosewater

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As if this column didn't already have enough creamy goodness, this is also the week you get to vote on the topics for Topical Blend #2. Note that the column will appear in three weeks. (Thanksgiving and Worlds is keeping me from having enough time to do it right by next week so I have to wait until the next non-theme week.)

Here are the themes. Remember you get to vote on a **Magic** theme and a non-**Magic** theme. In three weeks I will weave the two of them together into a hopefully memorable column.

### List A - Magic Related (Choose One)

- What happened to **Pestilence**?
- Alpha/Beta
- Drafting
- Legacy (the format, as opposed to the collection of artifacts that Gerard was responsible for)
- People who don't like new sets
- Why Skeletons are not just really, really rotten Zombies, despite what Cohen the Barbarian said to Ghaak in "The Last Hero" by Terry Pratchett
- The color red
- Impossible things to do in **Magic**
- Pros and Cons of Introducing a Sixth Color
- Biggest changes in Magic that never happened
- Enchant Worlds (aka World Enchantments)
- Cards That Failed To Get Through Design
- Popular Cards vs. Good Cards (And How We Design Each)
- What Would **Magic** Be Like Without Rarity
- The Role of Chaos Inducing Cards
- How *Sixth Edition* Rules Affect Design
- Themes outside **Magic** affecting **Magic** design
- How the Public Impacts **Magic**
- Coin Flip Cards
- Storyline Development
- Top **Magic** Cards Inspired by Real People/Items/Events
- Creature Types: Where do They Come From?
- Magic** Legends From R&D's Secret Lair
- 6th Color Pros and Cons
- The coolest color combination
- Game Theory and **Battle of Wits**
- Poison Abilities in **Magic** (Why was it abandoned? Will it come back in a new set? Etc.)
- Why "Urza's" is a Land "Subtype" rather than a Land "Supertype."
- "Ooze" Creature Types in **Magic**
- Zero-Cost Spells.

- Balancing/Creating New Countermagic
- Does Rules Lawyering Detract from **Magic**
- How the internet has affected **Magic**
- The Reduction of the number of X Spells in **Magic**
- Advantages for adding a 6th color
- Three color cards
- Most Comical Day in R&D
- The importance of Eternal formats
- R&D's reflections about the *Urza* Block (with Multiverse comments, maybe?)
- Most embarrassing moments of the Pro Tour
- Counterspells
- How to successfully lead a design team.
- Your top regrets in **Magic**
- Cards that change controller whenever something specific happens (as with, e.g., *Fractured Loyalty*)
- How **Magic** decks are similar to and different from "openings" and "opening positions" in other games (e.g., chess and Stratego)
- Possible ways to make **Magic** more appealing to women
- Ways you've changed cards to make it harder for players to cheat with them
- Recent changes to the color pie (e.g., putting abilities that give creatures -X/-0 into blue)
- Why cats in **Magic** have creature type Cat but dogs in **Magic** have creature type Hound (instead of Dog)
- Abilities that could be made into keywords (e.g., "Whenever this creature deals damage, you gain that much life.") and why you haven't done so
- Expansion symbols and logos
- The Power Nine
- History of *Grizzly Bears* (and other 2-drop 2/2s)
- Self-sacrifice cards and forced sacrifice
- Deck Milling throughout history (*Altar of Dementia*)
- The design and economy of Fat Packs.
- Magic's** Resource System
- Set Superdesign (amount of cards, amount of cards per color, amount of sets, release dates of sets etc)
- Creature Types
- Player Evolution (I personally think everyone (who isn't influenced a lot by others) goes through stages in their magic experience)
- Magic** Art
- Math and **Magic**
- Removal
- Internal set structure
- Exploring virgin territory in design
- How to know the game has been stretched too far
- Interconnectivity of sets
- Design of vanilla creatures (!)
- Un-set* design
- The race-class system
- Cards with Flying
- Frogs
- Designing Enchantments
- The Role of Chaos Inducing Cards
- Impossible things to do in **Magic**
- Original Decisions in **Magic** (Why five colors? Why those basic lands?, etc.)
- Choosing Set Themes
- What would early **Magic** (*Arabian Nights* through *Fallen Empires*) have been like under the block system?
- How has **magicthegathering.com** affected the game?
- Angels
- Faeries
- Stories about banned cards I've designed
- Why **Magic** cards seem better now than they used to

Submit my Vote

#### List B - Non-Magic Related (Choose One)

- Mark Rosewater is &\$\$%^# insane!
- Gophers
- College

- Anatomy
- Sigmund Freud
- Boredom
- Dungeons & Dragons**
- Time Travel
- The Matrix*
- Dragons
- Idiots and the Internet
- Monty Python
- Heavy Metal
- Norse Mythology
- Star Wars*
- My Personal Life
- Richard Garfield Anecdotes
- Puppies and Kittens: Cute Pets, or Intergalactic Invaders?
- Old Cartoons
- Video Games
- Family Guy
- Inspirational Sources
- Chicken and the Egg
- Music
- Singing
- Dancing
- Famous People
- Dr. Seuss
- Office Supplies
- Are Tomatoes Fruit?
- Why Canada spells things differently
- Richard Garfield vs Houdini
- Snack Foods
- Spandex
- Giant Turtles
- Hairstyles
- Geek figures in history
- Ramen Noodles
- TV shows you like
- How to keep a marriage together.
- My top regrets in life
- My favorite games
- My favorite recipes
- My favorite riddles and their answers rewritten in the context of whatever the other topic is your blending
- Things new employees at have to go thru at Wizards
- How to argue and win (you always say there's lots of arguing and debate there and as team leader you often need to settle these I assume)
- Writing for television
- Muppets
- Pet Peeves (aka Rants)
- Colleagues
- End of the World (or mankind)
- Artificial Intelligence
- Gameshows
- Sleeping
- Superstition
- Experiences in school
- Bad injuries
- Art
- Sir Isaac Newton
- World War II
- Mark Gottlieb
- Lies in the Media
- Comic Books
- The concept of Zero
- Chaos theory
- Soap opera and the proletariat color conflict

- Hotel reservations
- Eating out
- Pets
- Clarence Darrow
- The movie *Twelve Angry Men*
- That gunk that gets into your mouse
- Throat Wolf
- The life and works of William Shakespeare.
- Magic (you know like rabbits out of hats and such)
- My fans
- My production assistant days

*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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