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# Worldly Counsel

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, December 2, 2005



Long time, no see!

Sorry I don't have more to say to you this week after the holiday interrupted my regularly scheduled column, but the events of Grand Prix-Beijing and the gripping Player of the Year race are all very well-chronicled inside the Tournament Center as the events of this week of 2005 Worlds unfold in their wake. As you almost certainly are aware, I am writing this from halfway around the world from where I normally write my weekly column. We are smack-dab in the middle of the [Magic: the Gathering 2005 World Championships](#) in Yokohama, Japan as of this writing.

It has been a tremendously exciting week for me. As regular readers of my column know, I have been involved in the [Hall of Fame](#) developments for much of the last year. All the hard work put forth by everyone responsible for making that happen (Chris Galvin, Renee Roub, Randy Buehler, Greg Collins, the selection committee), and anyone who took part in the dialogue that helped shape the inaugural class can all rest easy that their efforts were not in vain.



Brian shares the stage with Richard Garfield during the Hall of Fame ceremony.

I was honored to have an opportunity to take part in the opening ceremonies as I announced each inductee and read off their prodigious accomplishments. It was humbling to be up on the stage with the game's creator Richard Garfield and play a small role in celebrating five of the game's greatest players as they were inducted into the Hall. **Magic** has been such an important part of my life since I first stumbled across it over 12 years ago and it was emotionally rewarding for me to give something back to a few of the players who have made it what it is today.

When Jon Finkel was announced as the last inductee, there was an electric buzz in the room – and I don't think there was a single player in the tournament who didn't fantasize about what it would be like to be standing up there themselves one day. When Antonino De Rosa was interviewed by Randy Buehler during the Worlds podcast, De Rosa was asked what he thought about the ceremony.

"I had chills," was Antonino's simple reply. For everyone involved in driving the Hall of Fame to this point, that was the best thing anyone could possibly have said. I made a point of directing Chris, Renee, and Greg to that podcast to hear that gratifying comment.

There is actually a treasure trove of great material that Randy has been stockpiling [in his podcast](#) all week long. Since I won't have much to write about this tournament until after the event has come to a close, I decided to sit down with Randy for five questions and ask him about his podcasts, the Hall of Fame, and the recently announced Pro Tour schedule.

**BDM:** What should people know about these podcast you have been doing for the last couple of Pro Tours? Tell people who haven't tuned in yet what they are all about.

**Randy:** The first thing is that you don't need an iPod to listen to these. We call it a podcast because we are going through all the cool stuff that Apple has for people with iPods and iTunes, but it is basically an audio blog. I wander around with this microphone and stick it in people's faces all day. It is the kind of stuff I would want to hear if I was at home trying to follow along with the Pro Tour.

It's got a bunch of quick sound bites talking to the players: "What did you draft?" "How did you do last round?" Stuff like that where we try to get a sense of what is like on the floor of the Pro Tour. What are the stories? Who is thinking and doing what? I'm really happy with it. The content has been really good. I just hope that people will at least check it out. I think if people check it out, they are going to come back for more.

If you have a computer – presumably you do if you are reading [magicthegathering.com](#) – that is basically all you need. Any of the media players will play the audio file. The easiest way you get it is by going to the Apple website, download iTunes if you need it – you can use your own media player if you prefer. You subscribe to the podcast and it is basically automatically downloaded to your computer whenever we have a new episode. I have been doing three episodes a day for Worlds and it is automatically downloaded to your computer when we have a new episode. That's the cool thing we get for having it be a podcast.



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I'm trying to think of what really stands out for me. There are interviews with all the Hall of Famers which are cool but I know what the best thing has been so far. Neil Reeves guaranteed victory on behalf of Team USA. I talked to him Tuesday night at the player barbecue about the National Team competition and he said Team USA will win – no ifs, no ands, and no buts. I have been following the team competition a fair bit and Team USA has been trash talking all weekend. You can hear it in the podcast, Neil guarantees victory. I am going to keep throwing that back at him and see if they back that up. They are in first place right now [after Day Two] so they might.

**BDM:** When the [Pro Tour schedule](#) was first announced there was a lot of buzz about Honolulu and Paris but there were three holes in the middle. The rest of the schedule has been made official this week. What do you think about the announcement?



Introducing Jon Finkel, Hall of Famer.

**Randy:** I think the schedule is pretty exciting for next year. We didn't have the site contracts locked down sooner so it is only now that we can announce all the sites. Prague should be awesome. That seems to be the hip place to go as a vacation destination for the younger European set. It is where the 20-somethings are going to party and now there is going to be a Pro Tour there next year.

Jon Finkel was even talking about coming to that one. Over the course of the day Wednesday, you could see that Jon was giving off this vibe that he didn't need this game anymore, that he didn't really need to play. But over the course of being here, you could see that he was getting sucked back in. He went from "I don't care" to "I would have played on Day One if it was Limited" to "I think I am going to go to Prague."

He might go to Prague – there are certainly no guarantees. A Booster Draft Pro Tour in Prague should be awesome. I was going to say that it would be the highlight of the schedule, but there is still Hawaii before it. The next one after Prague is Charleston, South Carolina. It is a nice, small American town of historical interest that is right on the ocean. It is a cool Americana destination, if you will. It is certainly not the biggest city in the States, but it has a lot of character and I think that will be very cool.

For the last Pro Tour we are going back to Kobe in Japan. The last time we were in Kobe, I still have memories of the Kobe beef. That staff dinner was off the charts – probably the best dinner I have ever had in my life. I am looking forward to Kobe just for that.

**BDM:** We had a pretty nice dinner here last night with the Hall of Fame inductees and their families. You have been right at the heart of the Hall of Fame since it was first set into motion. How do you think the whole experience panned out?

**Randy:** I am already looking forward to next year. It felt really good because the Hall of Fame came off the way it was always imagined. The players clearly cared, the inductees felt like it was this gigantic honor. The players who were here for the induction ceremony all wanted themselves to be on that stage next.

The [Hall of Fame](#) web page turned out to be spectacular. I think it is one of the best things we have had on our website in years. If people haven't seen it already, they should check it out. It is really well put together. There are these [player pages](#) where you can go back and look at the players' careers year by year. I think the whole thing came together great.

Now I hear people starting to argue about [Year Two](#). Who is coming in on the ballot? Who is left over from Year One and still deserves it? And people also look at that Year Three class as a crazy class to argue about. People seem to think there are seven auto-ins in the Year Three class.



Jon Finkel and company were feted at an exclusive Hall of Fame dinner in Yokohama.

**BDM:** You are one of the players in that crowded Year Three class, Randy. When you were watching the ceremony, did you think about what it would be like to standing on that stage two years from now? What would that mean for you?

**Randy:** I have been thinking about that from long before the idea of a Hall of Fame was officially proposed. As a baseball fan, it was always the history that drew me in. Looking back and comparing statistics and arguing about who was better at this and who was better at that. It is just one of the things I enjoy about my hobbies in general. I can't imagine a better honor. I enjoy working for Wizards of the Coast. I think my job is great but I am still a player in my heart of hearts. I still feel like this rogue agent who has snuck behind enemy lines and is fighting the good fight for the players. That is just how I identify myself as a person. That is what my life is about. It would just be insane to be inducted.

As a candidate I didn't think I had a good shot because my career was so much shorter than other people's careers. I feel like I was one of the best players in the game for the two years that I was a Pro Tour regular, BUT I was only a regular for two years. That doesn't sound like Hall of Fame material but people keep telling me that I am an auto-in due to my writing and working for R&D. It makes me a very weird candidate but I think I am in the mix. I don't know how much

sleep I will be able to get that year – just look at the Year Three class: Kai Budde, Zvi Mowshowitz, Tsuyoshi Fujita, Nicolai Herzog, Mike Turian, Ben Rubin, me, not to mention having players like Brian Selden in the mix PLUS all the players from the first two years who didn't get in. It should make for some fun debates – and that is really what the Hall is all about. It is about the debate; looking back on that history and thinking about it and arguing about it. I think that is where the real fun in the process is for everyone that has been involved.

**BDM:** *One last question and then you can get back to your interviews with the players. How many World Championships have you attended, and out of all of them what memory stands out for you the most?*

**Randy:** 1998 Worlds was the first one I attended and I have been to every one since – how many is that? Wow, this is number eight. I have been around for awhile. It's weird I always used to be the new kid. I wasn't even aware of the Pro Tour when the first one happened so I always felt like I came to the party late. Especially with the WoTC guys like Mark Rosewater and Skaff Elias – the guys who put the Pro Tour together in the first place. Now I am apparently the grand old man, the guy with the longest tenure.



*Will Randy (pictured with Skaff Elias) be on the other side of the Hall of Fame dinner in two years? Let the debate start now.*

The memory I always come back to actually took place in this very building in 1999. I was in a Rochester Draft sitting next to Sigurd Eskeland. Sigurd and I had been working together – we had actually taught a class on **Magic** in Europe the week before the Pro Tour, so we had been practicing together. I had 6-0'd Day One and Sigurd had gone 5-1. He was sitting next to me at the draft table, and deep in the last pack I had this aggressive green-red deck and what I really need is this **Goblin Masons** – a 2/1 for two mana that was just what my curve needed. Sigurd was on my left and I figured I could just bounce the card off of him. We had been working together and I figured he was not going to counterdraft me, so I take one card for my deck and try to long-range the goblin.

He just counterdrafted it from me and looked at me with this smirk on his face like he was going “Ha-ha,” and I picked up the only warning of my entire Pro Tour career. I stood up, turned to him and yelled, “F\*\*\* you if you think you are getting an Extended deck from me!” I then turned to Jeff Donais and said, “Give me my warning!” and stormed off to build my deck. I don't know why that sticks with me but that is what I remember the most when I think of Worlds.

## Firestarter: National Team Chances

After two days of Worlds, the United States is leading the Worlds team competition, and team member Neil Reeves has guaranteed victory. Do you think they'll hold on to make it to Sunday's finals? Is there a darkhorse candidate you want to back? Will the Japanese team make a run during Extended to become a factor? Sound off in the forums!

*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](http://Top8Magic.com), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.*



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