

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



# Legacy of the Game

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, December 30, 2005



Nothing is as much fun as getting it right. Usually I wait until after a tournament to interview the players that did well but in the days leading up to Grand Prix Philadelphia I did an interview with Chris Pikula about the format and his current relationship to the game.

The potential Hall of Famer sweated all week that he would look bad come the GP, but ended up coming within one game of winning the whole thing. I think maybe the added pressure sharpened his skills and pushed him to do better than he might have otherwise. I am currently accepting pre-Tournament interview 'applications' for the 2006 season.

This past weekend saw [Grand Prix action](#) on three different continents. We had a relative unknown conquer Australia, a World Champion dominate Europe, and a rising star shine brightest among a constellation of Japan's biggest names. If you want Extended tech, you have four tip-top Top 8s to draw upon over the past two weekends -- whether your tastes run toward Tog, Madness Tog, or the way-out Seismic Assault deck from Japan.

Of course, none of that tech will do you much good if you are heading to Philadelphia for this weekend's North American Grand Prix. Legacy is the format on tap for Saturday, marking the first time that an Eternal format has been a part of the Pro Tour since the 1996 Type 1 Pro Tour in Dallas. It is going to be a relatively unexplored format that has seen little high-profile action, caught between the allure of Vintage and the necessity of Standard and Extended. For those of you unable to make the trip to Philly, there will be another Legacy Grand Prix in Lille, France on Dec. 17-18.

There has been a huge buildup for this tournament and attendance is expected to be a record-breaker. Some have argued that card availability would be an issue, but unless you are going to be playing the [Time Vault/Flame Fusillade](#) combo deck, the cards can all be had. Even when the cards are hard to come by there is no shortage of recent decks that are viable for the weekend.

Affinity gets all of its banned parts back -- except for [Skullclamp](#), natch -- and while it could use dual lands, why would it really want to? Of course, the deck could always use a little spice from older sets. The prospect of [Beserking](#) an [Atog](#) and [Flinging](#) it seems like too much fun to not at least playtest some. I even saw someone bringing [Chains of Mephistopheles](#) out of his Affinity sideboard to combat the card drawing in Landstill.

The synergy between cards old and new will be part of the fun this weekend. The interaction between the new breed of **Magic** superstars and the old guard will be the rest of it. This format is sure to drag out all types of semi-retired magicians slinging their favorite spells and summoning (make no mistake about it, summoning -- there is no new templating for this crowd) their pet creatures.

One of the players in attendance will be Chris Pikula, who has been rabid about the Legacy format since this Grand Prix was announced. Chris works with many a **Magic** player and apparently much of his workday has been dedicated to poring over any and all available lists and results for the Legacy format.

Chris, who has three Pro Tour Top 8s to his credit as well as three Grand Prix Top 8 finishes, has never quite retired, but appears more interested in **Magic** than he has in some time. The only times he has played in the last couple of years has been when there was a Limited event -- and generally Team Limited at that. I spoke with Chris about his newfound passion for the game, the Hall of Fame, and his plans for the weekend.

"I guess I just missed it," shrugged the [Meddling Mage](#) when asked about his rekindled interest in playing **Magic** of all deck sizes -- 60 as well as 40. "I really love **Magic**, and you can only go so long without something you love. **Magic** isn't like Tony Tsai; you can't just keep a picture of it in your wallet to look at on cold, lonely days when you just need someone to hold you."



Pikula has been working overtime to prep for Philly.

PRODUCTS

MAGIC ONLINE

MESSAGE BOARDS

MAGIC General Forum

magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

Initially inspired by the lure of a new format, Chris admitted that Legacy has been somewhat daunting. "It is just so big, and even though I'm excited about **Magic** again I just don't have the time to tackle such an enormous format. Also, most of the cards and decks that make the format seem like it would be fun don't end up really being competitive."

Despite his reservations, Chris claims to have found a deck that he is comfortable with although he is keeping it fairly close to the vest. At a recent Neutral Ground mock tournament, Chris's deck went 3-0 against an array of decks including goblins, combo, and control.

"I'm playing some homebrew," was all he would divulge. "The two things I enjoy the most in **Magic** are drawing extra cards and destroying land, so I'm going to do that. And I prefer to do both one at a time. I'll take **Ophidian** and **Stone Rain** over **Fact or Fiction** and **Armageddon** any day. I think there are a ton of viable decks, because the format is not deeply explored yet. One thing I do know is there will be a lot of **Mogg Fanatics** and **Force of Wills**."

Chris said that he thinks the level of energy he's put in is being exaggerated by some of his co-workers, although it is more work put in by Pikula for 60-card testing than this humble writer can remember.

"I've done a lot of talking," Pikula said. "Talk is easy, but you don't really learn anything. A couple weeks ago I woke up at 6 a.m. and drove to Philly for an Extended PTQ. That was the most effort seen from me in years in constructed. I went 2-3, and had a great time."

**"I don't think that the Top 8 of this tourney will look anything like the Legacy Top 8s that you can find online. I think the Grand Prix will likely make the previous results of the format look silly." – Chris Pikula**



*The man and the mage.*

"I would guess that there will be some Goblins and RDW simply because there will be so much in the field. There will probably be some Tog and combo too. I don't think that the Top 8 of this tourney will look anything like the Legacy Top 8s that you can find online. I think the Grand Prix will likely make the previous results of the format look silly."

Forum denizens can draw a parallel between Chris's renewed interest in the game and the announcement of the Pro Tour Hall of Fame. Chris has been a vocal member of the forum community regarding the Hall since its initial announcement. He has made no secret of his desire to be a member and missed being the fifth inductee on the inaugural ballot by the narrowest of margins.

"I'm told I have a decent chance," Chris said when asked about his chances for making the Hall on the second go-round. "I think I deserve it. After this year it gets really tough, which I think is unfortunate. I think many voters will have to choose five people, even though they will think that 10 people are deserving. I don't see the point, really. Most of the guys up for the Hall of Fame are great guys who make the game more fun. Why not bring them all back to the Pro Tour as soon as possible?"

Aside from himself, who does Chris think will make it into the second class from this past ballot? "I would assume The Hump is a lock for this year. I hope he gets in. He was one of the people who made me love **Magic**. He was on the big screen at Pro Tour 1, tapping **Sindbad** and using his **Sylvan Library**. He is a king among gamers. Other than that I have not thought about it, except that I hope the filthy cheaters don't get many votes."

Chris recently made a cameo in my column when I wrote about drafting Ravnica with Jon Finkel. That crowd of allegedly retired gamers has been getting together quite often – almost regularly to draft the new set. As much fun as Chris has been having with the format, he thinks it can only get better.

"I think old-timers are coming back because they are hoping for another *Invasion Block*," Chris mused. "*Invasion Block* was more fun than basically anything. Right now the *Ravnica* draft is pretty good, but I think when the next set comes out and more color combos become viable, the format will be really good."

If you are going to be at Philadelphia this weekend, Chris won't be hard to find. He can usually be found holding court and signing copies of **Meddling Mage** – something that has not lost its appeal for Chris.

"I never get tired of it. How could I? I just wish I had a cool signature."



*Finkel and Pikula have been seeing each other across the table more lately.*

## Firestarter: Grand Prix or merely good?

A Legacy Grand Prix is definitely a firestarter in and of itself. But let's focus the debate a little. Do you think the card availability and an unknown metagame will cause people to shy away from the event? Or will the viability of RDW, Goblins, Affinity, Tog, and other recent decks lead to massive turnout?

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.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Brian David-Marshall](#) archive

---

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

---

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

