

Everything you need to know to be ready for the *Dissension* prerelease. **Advice and *Dissension*: A Prerelease Primer**

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It has been over twelve years since I was shaken by a frustrated and desperate man in search of **Magic** packs. That event led me down the path that eventually deposited me at your virtual doorstep selling this weekend's Prerelease tournament. Do you know what the secret to being a successful salesperson is? You have to believe in your product.

I could not write this article if I was not excited about attending the Prerelease and getting to know the remaining three guilds of the *Ravnica* block. Despite the 12 years of complete immersion the world of **Magic**, I have never enjoyed a block as much as I have been enjoying this one. Based on what little I have seen so far, *Dissension* promises to admirably follow in the footsteps of its predecessors.

I say "based on what little I have seen" because it is funny how people always assume I know all the cards when I play at the prerelease. My opponents usually know more of what is going on than I do as I don't even look at all the previews on this site. For me, part of the joy of the prerelease is cracking those new packs for the first time and exploring all the new possibilities.

Now if you are one of those spoilsports who love spoilers and knowing all the new cards before the tournament, you can simply CTRL-F and search for *Nosy Parker* to see the preview card lurking beneath. After all, you probably are familiar with Prerelease tournaments and can skip over the bulk of this article. On the other hand, if you have not been to a Prerelease tournament before, then I am here to convince you, prepare you for what to expect, and perhaps sway you not to look at the preview card.

If you attend a prerelease tournament this weekend, then most of you will be getting a *Ravnica* Tournament Pack and three *Dissension* booster packs to build a 40-card minimum deck with.



I understand that there might be some parts of the world where you only get two packs, but by and large it is three packs. That means you will start off with three *Dissension* rares and nine uncommons to go along with your normal allotment of *Ravnica* rares from the tournament pack.

On top of that, when you sign up for the Prerelease you will receive a commemorative foil card that will never be available anywhere else. Alright, that's a lie. I am sure it will be available on eBay. Or at the vendor's table at an upcoming tournament. But this is the only time you can get one simply for signing up for the tournament. The card is always a rare and they have become increasingly playable over the past few blocks. The last two cards were Gleancrawler and Djinn Illuminatus and despite not having found their breakout decks yet, I expect that both of them will see plenty of action by time Charleston rolls around. Ironically, the highest profile foil promo has to be someone who would prefer to stick to the shadows – the alternate art Ink-Eyes, Servant of Oni.

That's what you get if you don't win a single match, which is pretty good. If you do manage a perfect record or a perfect record minus one match, you will win a fistful of *Dissension* packs on top of that. The packs won't go on sale for at least two weeks, so this is your only chance to get your hands on additional *Dissension* packs between now and then.

If you have never signed up for a tournament before, it can be a little intimidating if you don't know what to expect, but there is really nothing to it besides a tiny bit of paperwork. You will probably need to fill out a form for the Tournament Organizer so they can enter your name and DCI number into the computer. If you do not have a DCI number, then you are facing a little more paperwork, but the whole process should take no more than a couple of minutes. A DCI number is a PIN – or personal identification number – that is assigned to any player who wants to play in a sanctioned **Magic** tournament by the DCI, which is the governing body for organized play for Wizards of the Coast games.

In addition to letting you play in sanctioned tournaments, a DCI number will allow you to track your progress as a player and see your worldwide rating. It also makes you eligible for DCI Rewards. Players with a DCI number get online newsletters with info about upcoming tournaments, insights into new formats, and a general heads up to the goings ons in **Magic**. If you play in a certain amount of events each month, you also get cool free stuff in the mail. In the last month, I have been mailed a much of tokens, a foil Hypnotic Specter, two textless Giant Growths, and a textless Putrefy – and I have not played in that many sanctioned events. They definitely make having the DCI number and playing in sanctioned tournaments worthwhile.

Once you have your paperwork filled out, you might find yourself faced with the choice of a couple of different tournament types. All tournament organizers will run events known as "flights" which will have a fixed number of participants, rounds, and prizes. They will generally be 32-person tournaments that run four rounds



with everyone with three or four wins snagging *Dissension* prizes. This is most likely the tournament that you want to play in if you are not very experienced. These tournaments run all day long and fire off as soon as they fill up. You don't need to be on site by a specific time and you can sign up for multiple events over the course of the weekend to rack up additional cards and experience.

Based on past emails, there are plenty of you out there who have only played **Magic** in the digital form but may choose to venture into the sunlight for a crack at the new product months before it hits the virtual shelves. You may be looking for a shot at greater glory and bigger payouts from your tournament. Check with your local organizer, because many of them offer a big tournament at the start of each day. These tournaments will not have a fixed attendance and will offer greater prizes to the top finishers after enough rounds to grind the field down to a clear winner – a winner who will walk away with a full box of *Dissension* and some pretty nice bragging rights.



One of the dynamics I have seen at many Prerelease tournaments is the experienced friend dragging the reluctant protégé into the fray. Might I recommend Two-Headed Giant for this sub-section? Two-Headed Giant is actually the perfect event for the new player with an experienced friend because of the way the format is set up. At the beginning of the tournament, each two-player team elects a dominant head who has the final say-so on every play. It is a great learning experience where you get to discuss **Magic** strategy as it is happening. In my opinion, there is not actually a better way to learn about how to play the game.

Two-Headed is also a great format if you have a wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, or conjoined twin who wants to find out what you have been doing with your Saturdays. Since one player can ultimately make all the decisions you can play with your significant other, make all the decisions, and share the **Magic** experience.

With all ten guilds in the mix and small card pools for the second and third sets, there is little doubt that getting the mana right in full block *Ravnica* Limited is going to be one of the most challenging aspects of the Kobe PTQ season. You are only going to need to worry about 70% of those guilds this weekend, as there will be no *Guildpact*. With three packs of *Dissension*, there should be more than enough cards for you to fully explore the Rakdos, Simic, and Azorius guilds.

Keep an eye on your Selesnya cards out of the *Ravnica* portion as that will give you the broadest swath of *Dissension* guilds to work with, leaving only your Rakdos on the sidelines. Blue/Green/White should be a popular arrangement but always keep in mind how easy it is to splash two colors with the right tools in this block. In past sets it would not be uncommon for a player to splash two Mountains and a Red removal spell. How different is that from splashing a Lightning Helix off of a Boros Garrison and Boros Signet? Keep your eye on any unused guild cards and the accompanying mana fixers. There is no reason to leave a perfectly devastating Rakdos card in your sideboard when you can splash it as easily as a card with a single colored mana casting cost.

Here is an example of one Rakdos removal card you may see a lot this weekend. This is for those of you have stuck all the way through and you nosy parkers who could not slog through the thousand or so words to get here in due course. Now if want to be surprised, you could always not click here:



This is a pretty exciting card. While I don't get too excited about land destruction in general, I do stand up and take notice when it can happen at instant speed – and has an even better primary function. Imagine coming out of the gates fast with some janky Red guys like Sell-Sword Brute and a random three-drop and having this ready on turn 4. If your opponent plays a creature – any creature... none of the normal Black removal restrictions apply here – you can kill it. If they miss a

creature drop or – even better – a land drop, you can send `em back to the stone-age with your new-fangled Stone Rain. I don't even want to discuss what happens if you hit a freshly played karoo there.

There is much more to the Prerelease than simply playing in a tournament though. Many events will feature guest illustrators. I know that Jim Murray will be at the event in Virginia that the Star City crew is running and the New York and Ohio Valley regions usually sport signings as well. Check with your local organizer to see if you need to pack any extra cards to get signed. Of course, all the tournament organizers will have plenty of dealer tables if you need to pick up any hard-to-find gems.

For me one of the most appealing aspects of the Prerelease is the opportunity to spend the weekend playing **Magic** with my friends – many of whom I have become friends with at Prereleases. There is a different atmosphere at a Prerelease than at any other kind of tournament, even something as low-key as **Friday Night Magic**. Everyone is there to see the cards and I find there is even more interaction with other players than at any other level of play. It is a great opportunity to meet people, trade cards, talk about decks, and maybe win some prizes.

If you have never been to a tournament before, I urge you try a **Prerelease** on for size this weekend. Make sure you let the Tournament Organizer that it is your first foray into this aspect of the game. Since you are a potential repeat customer they will make sure that things go smoothly for you. With any luck they can guide you to some of the more experienced local players who have a knack for mentorship. Even if you peeked at the preview card you still might be surprised by what a good time you have.