

News from R&D and introducing our newest column! Taking You To The Beginning, At Last

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Today I'll be using this slot to catch you up on a number of things going on. The main one as far as the site is concerned is the latest column swap, but I'll also be mentioning some important news from R&D as well as some other more general news from the website. All set?

A Different Kind of Return to the Past

First up is news from R&D, which deals with **Magic's** errata policy. Currently Wizards has two main systems for dealing with problem cards, either banning/restricting or issuing errata. Generally speaking, the intention has been to use banning and restricting for cards that are too powerful, and to issue errata to cards that either have mistakes (like the original version of [Impulse](#)) or need to be updated because of things like rules changes (such as Wall cards gaining the defender ability when that rule was changed).

The issue is that there is a small subset of cards that proved too powerful when printed but were dealt with through errata rather than banning or restricting. Examples of this would be [Great Whale](#) or [Basalt Monolith](#), each of which received "power-level errata" to prevent degenerate combos, thus avoiding having to restrict or ban the cards in question. So, in the interest of using each system what it was intended for, with Monday's Oracle update R&D is removing a bunch of errata that deals with power level. For now we just wanted to get the word out there, so for a more involved discussion on the reasoning behind the move and what it means make sure to read Aaron Forsythe's column this coming Friday. In the meantime, here are the most prominent cards Monday's Oracle update will attempt to restore to their printed wording (though note that some of the cards on this list didn't originally get the errata for power reasons).



- [Palinchron](#)
- [Treachery](#)
- [Great Whale](#)
- [Cloud of Faeries](#)
- [Priest of Gix](#)
- [Peregrine Drake](#)

- [Iridescent Drake](#)
- [Karmic Guide](#)
- [Basalt Monolith](#)
- [Time Vault](#)
- [Intuition](#)
- [Enduring Renewal](#)
- [Balance](#)
- [Drop of Honey](#)
- [Goblin Snowman](#)
- [Celestial Dawn](#)

School's Out



As readers of Saturday School found out [a couple weeks ago](#), after more than three and half years the Saturday School column is closing its doors. As happened with other columns we've rotated out recently, I'm sure there will be a number of readers that are going to really miss what's leaving, and I certainly don't blame them. But even if you're in that crowd, I hope you'll take a moment to hear me out on what we're bringing instead, why that new column is critical to the game we love, and why Saturday School was the column that had to go. First, let's talk about the problem the new column will deal with. At this point **Magic** has clearly proven that it's here for the long haul, and as it ages it

becomes increasingly important to continue bringing in new players. Another part of the background is that we believe the sense of community the online experience brings players is critical to the game's success. By reading articles, learning more about the game, and getting involved with others who play, the online community experience helps get and keep players engaged in **Magic**.

But, there's always been a big gap between new players (or new readers) and where the online experience is targeted. For beginners, there isn't any single effective resource to help them work their way up to the level everybody else is at. When they come to any major **Magic** site the experience is bewildering at best, and intimidating or frustrating at the worst. Anybody that's taught someone how to play **Magic** has probably had this experience, because there's no good single place to point that player so that they have a clear path to proceed from beginner to informed player. To a certain extent, the same also goes for players that may be a bit more experienced with the game, but haven't read anything on the web before. The articles they find are targeted at much more informed readers, often contain a frightening level of jargon, and commonly assume you've read at least some number of the most influential articles already published, like Mike Flores' [Who's The Beatdown](#). Beginning this fall, Wizards of the Coast is launching many new initiatives to increase the number of players coming into the game, and we'll also be working to raise awareness of **Magic's** online community even higher than where it's already at. What the new column will do is provide a clear path for those new people to hit the ground running, solving the problem of where to send new players. How does the new column do that? I'm glad you asked!

Magic Academy Opens Its Doors

Starting a week from today, this Saturday column slot will now be for our beginner's column: "Magic Academy". The column will be structured in a completely new way from anything else I've seen. The idea is, we're starting all the way at the beginning and walking newer players step by step through everything they need to know. The critical part here is that the column is written *linearly*. The first ten weeks start all the way at the beginning of covering what players need to know, and each article builds off the previous one. Unlike current columns, where people tend to jump in at the current article and then figure things out from there, the Magic Academy will encourage any new readers to start at article one and work their way through the material until they're caught up with the present. Additionally, the column will have its own home page, which lists all the articles and topics covered so far, similar to a table of contents if this were an more like an online book. Because of that, readers new to the web can go to that page, see the list of what's available so far, and decide for themselves where on the path they think they're ready to try. And, when in doubt, they can always just start at step one and go from there.



Now, that may not sound like much to some of you out there, but as a producer of a site the size of magicthegathering.com and dealing with a product as huge and complex as **Magic**, I hope you'll take my word for it when I say it's a *huge* deal. In fact, I pitched the idea behind this column back when I first interviewed for this job, two and half years ago. Since then, we've been planning and preparing for when this column would go live. Once it does, and particularly once it's been up and running for a while, we'll have a great resource for all those new players to find what they need, easily!

Not Just For Beginners



The best part is, since it's written in linear fashion, the column will progress a little farther each week. Even if you aren't a beginner, most players reading this could use some help in at least some part of their game, and at some point this column will cover those areas for you. Also, the way we're putting the articles together, we think even the most experienced players will have fun reading them. In addition to walking you through the things that make the game work, each week the author will recommend other articles on that week's subject, helping players find the game's best articles that they may have missed otherwise. Thanks to that, regular readers of this column will be among the most informed and well-read players on the web given some time. Most weeks will also illustrate their lessons with examples from the past, using famous blunders or genius moves from the Pro Tour and other premiere events, giving readers a fun dose of history and nostalgia in the process. Even if you're good enough to be World Champion, we think you'll find this new column informative and enjoyable.

Another key to this column is its resource nature. Because of its linear fashion, we'll know exactly what the readers are ready for on any given week. As we get to certain topics, we'll be able to run resource articles intended to stand the test of time which inform the players on very specific things since we're able to key into exactly the skill level we're at on any given weekend. For example, there's never been an article I was happy with that did a great job of detailing *exactly* how to do a booster draft for readers that have never heard of drafts. With a column like this, when the timing is appropriate, we can spend a week doing just that, in depth, with graphics or maybe even video to walk players easily and conveniently through the process. Because each article becomes a resource, this column encourages articles like this for everything out there that may not have a good explanation yet.

For now I think you've got as good an idea as you're going to get from me without actually reading it yourself. All I ask is that you try approaching the new column with an open mind and give it a chance. The first article is structured a little out of order, just to get the ball rolling, but aside from that the first ten articles are designed to get all the basics handled in one easy path. From there, the author will pick something new each week and over the course of probably a couple years put together what in effect will probably be the single best, most comprehensive "book" on the game ever written! Who's writing it? You'll have to check in next week to see, but I think most readers will be very happy to see who we've got lined up.

Why Saturday School

So, why was Saturday School the column that had to go? As always, it comes down to how many slots we have to work with. We're steadily moving the site's content strategy to focusing as much as possible on areas we feel are critical but which won't or can't get done on some other website. Though there has been a little content aimed at beginners on other sites, there's no way a site like Star City or Brainburst could (or would) run something on the level of what we're planning with Magic Academy. As something we consider crucial to continuing the growth of our game, that means content like that has to happen on **magicthegathering.com**.

With that in mind, Saturday School is exactly the opposite. The content Saturday School dealt with can be found on multiple sites, including Star City, and even in almost exactly the same format. We're comfortable with the idea that if we discontinue our rules column, other sites will continue theirs in that vacuum, and perhaps other sites that don't currently have something like that may now consider adding it. Additionally, there isn't much of anything in a rules column that we can do that other sites can't do just as well, so we feel it's better to remove what's otherwise a redundant column in order to bring something completely new, something that couldn't appear anywhere else.

Looking Forward

While I've got you here, there are a couple other things I can share regarding where we're at and where we're going. First off, our technical staff continues to be hard at work overhauling the backend of the site as we continue our migration to a better, more flexible environment. Those changes



aren't very noticeable on your end yet, but as the site improves we'll be much better at what we do and will have a number of new options open up that we've wanted to explore. As we get toward the end of this year, and especially for next year, we've got a number of new features coming that I know a bunch of you are going to love.

Also speaking of the future, I will announce here that there will be two more changes in the columnist lineup between now and the release of *Time Spiral*. The first I expect to happen in August, where we'll be taking one of the existing columns and giving it a new writer, then changing the angle of what that column deals with. So, though the overall topic will be the same under the new writer, how it's approached (and which audience it's aimed at) will be changing significantly. On that one, I expect you'll be finding out *which* column is changing sometime in the next two weeks or so. Feel free to post your guesses or suggestions in the forums in the meantime.

After that, we expect another columnist switch once *Time Spiral* previews are complete, but that one's just an author change, not a complete reworking of the column. You'll be hearing about that change in August as we gear up for the big *Time Spiral* push.

Speaking of which, I have to say this is one of those times where I really envy you. As you've read from many of us who work at Wizards of the Coast, one of the toughest parts of our jobs is knowing about the amazing things that are on the horizon, but having to wait to see it happen. Mark my words when I say *Time Spiral* will be one of those times. Don't get me wrong, I *love* Ravnica, and I think you're all going to get a great kick out of *Coldsnap* as well. But when *Time Spiral* hits, it's going to be one of those things that goes down in the game's history as a monumental event. And all of you are still going to get to experience finding out why!

In the meantime, thank you to everyone that has taken the time to send in the great suggestions and observations I receive every day. Though encouraging words and praise certainly make my day easier, all of the other feedback means a lot to me as well, and I can definitely say those opinions you take the time to send in significantly affect how the site is put together. I hope you'll take a moment to stop by the thread for this article and let us know what you think on what I've dealt with here today, and maybe have some fun guessing on the stuff I wasn't able to fully flesh out yet. Like I've done with previous articles like this, I'll finish this one up with a little something from the future for you, this time courtesy of Scott M. Fischer.

