

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



# The Silver Statuette

Aaron Forsythe  
 Latest Developments  
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A few weeks ago, I was handed a lovely silver statuette by Bill Rose, VP of R&D.

I had been at a corporate "all-hands" meeting earlier in the day during which our CEO, Loren Greenwood, announced which of our products had won Origins Awards this year, including *Ravnica: City of Guilds* taking of the Collectible Card Game Expansion of the Year award. I was sitting next to creative director Brady Dommermuth at the meeting, and we exchanged fist pounds as a nod to all the work we had done on that particular card set. It was nice to see.

By the time the afternoon had rolled around, I had all but forgotten the award... until Bill handed me a replica of the statuette that Loren had showed the crowd that morning—and it had my name on it! Suddenly it didn't feel like *Ravnica* won an award, but like I had won an award for helping to create *Ravnica*. (I later learned that I'd be getting a *second* statuette for my design work on **Axis & Allies Miniatures**, which won the Gamers' Choice Best Historical Game of the Year. When it comes time for my mid-year review, I'm going to walk into Buehler's office and slam those two little ladies down on his desk.)



I danced about the office for a while, showing off my statuette to anyone that would look at it. I got a lot of "cools" and "awesomes" from the other guys in the Pit, but Brian Schneider's reaction was a bit different. He took the statue out of my hand, read it, shook his head, and then gave it back to me.

His silence said it all. Man, is development at best misunderstood, and at worst underappreciated. Maybe not here at Wizards, but definitely by the world at large.

As *Ravnica's* lead developer, Brian put more hours into making that set as good as it could be than most people listed on that trophy, yet his name isn't on it. (Brady Dommermuth and Jeremy Cranford are other deserving individuals who put long hours into making *Ravnica* what it is.) In fact, the people at Origins never even asked anything

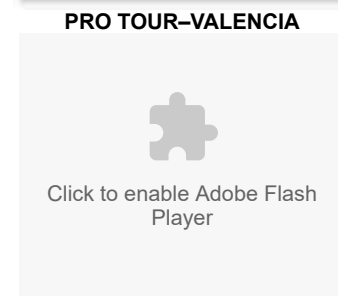
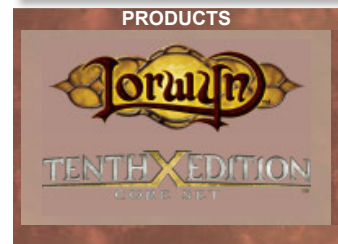
except who the set's designers were; I can only assume they view Wizards' developers the same way most other companies use developers—as playtesters and tweekers, but little else.

In the best-case scenario, which *Ravnica* was close to thanks to a fabulous design, development still has to pass judgment on every card, every cycle, and every theme in the set, and come up with replacements for anything that feels lacking. In this way, we often have to play the role of back-up designers. On top of that, we have to playtest like madmen, making sure the card set works well in every format that relies heavily on modern cards, from sealed deck to draft to Standard to Block to casual Constructed, which is more of development as most people know it. We constantly wrangle with the creative team to make sure that card art matches card abilities. We also have to work with Mark Gottlieb and our editors to make sure the rules all work, the text all fits on cards, that new players won't be completely dumbfounded by the set, that there are little nuggets of goodness for players of older formats, and lots of other things that many people take for granted.

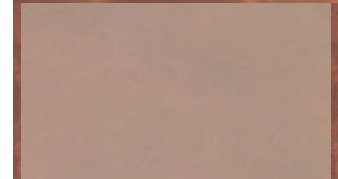
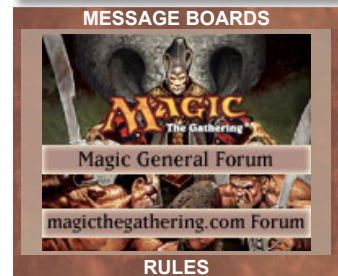
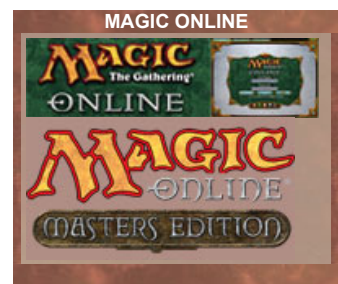
And like I said, *Ravnica* was comparatively easy in this regard.

I enjoyed the time wherein my primary role was that of designer. Making cards, sets, and mechanics is great fun. I'm looking forward to the release of *Time Spiral* for, at that time, I will have helped to design every set legal in Standard, including *Ninth Edition* and *Coldsnap*.

But I'm looking forward to the release of *Time Spiral* for another reason as well—because I'm proud of the work that Schneider, Devin Low, Matt Place, myself, and many others did on the set as developers. In fact, I'll publicly state here that *Time Spiral* is the best developed set we've made in the five years I've been working here. And hopefully, you won't even notice.



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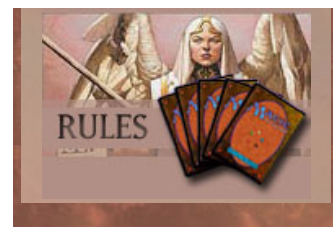


As a member of the design team, I'm not afraid to say that what we handed off had serious flaws, so much that I'm not going into too much detail. But suffice it to say, development not only had to *pass judgment* on a bunch of themes, mechanics, and cards, but make a ton of them as well.

I honestly believe this upcoming set is the crowning achievement of Schneider's career here at Wizards. And while his name won't end up on any awards, he's one of the main reasons for all the positive play experiences you have with *Time Spiral*. Not only did he run the "second design" of the set, but he still kept all of us focused on making Limited, Standard, and our other formats as fun as balanced as ever. Yes, the set is still Rosewater's baby and he was the one with the vision to get us all started, but Brian was the key player behind the scenes.

Now that Brian has passed the torch of head developer to me, it's up me to make everything okay from now on. It's a tough task, but with Devin, Matt, Gottlieb, Del Laugel, Mike Turian, and Henry Stern here helping me out, and Mark and Randy whispering in my ear, I feel that the future is as bright as ever.

Thanks for reading.



## Last Week's Poll:

How did you feel about the Selecting <i>Tenth Edition</i> promotion?		
Better than previous Selection Core Set promotions.	2407	34.3%
About the same as previous Selection Core Set promotions.	1916	27.3%
I'm not qualified to compare.	1404	20.0%
Worse than previous Selection Core Set promotions.	698	9.9%
I didn't pay attention to it.	594	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7019</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

We tried really hard to make sure the card-vs.-card votes were compelling this time, as opposed to stuff like [Animal Magnetism](#) vs. [Weird Harvest](#).

## This Week's Poll:

**Isn't Lotus Bloom awesome??!**

Yes

No

What?

*Aaron Forsythe was a professional **Magic** player and Internet columnist prior to leaving Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to join Wizards of the Coast. His first duty here was Content Manager of this very website, a job that required him to do actual work as opposed to playing games all the time. So when a position opened in R&D, he jumped at the chance. He is now director of **Magic** R&D, and still plays **Magic** in his free time when he's not busy playing **Magic**.*



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