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# Ask Wizards - February, 2007

Ask Wizards  
Thursday, February 1, 2007

Do you have a question about **Magic: The Gathering** or *Wizards of the Coast*? Send it, along with your name and location, to us via this [email form](#). We'll post a new question and answer each day.

## February 28, 2007 🔍

**Q:** I went to an event in New York back in 1996 where Wizards of the Coast threw a giant tournament with a very big purse (first place got \$17,000). Has Wizards ever considered running another "Pro Tour" event?  
--Jon F., New York, NY, USA

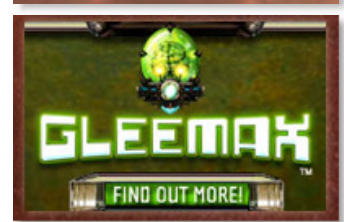
**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, Magic R&D—Organized Play Coordinator:  
  
Jon,  
  
As the only organized play person at Wizards of the Coast, I get a letter or two each year asking if we'd ever do another Pro Tour. Unfortunately, Magic isn't bringing in anywhere near the money it was making back in 1996, and thus we do not currently have the financial resources to do such an event. We do, however, run a National tournament each year (at the Origins convention), where we give away several cases of product to the Top 8 competitors. Hopefully we'll see you there.

[What is 'What If?' Week?](#)

## February 27, 2007 🔍

**Q:** Let me start by saying that I'm a longtime fan. I've been playing **Magic** for over 13 years (since Alpha). Even though I've been very successful in my career of choice (not that it matters but I'm the creator of the sitcoms "Soup to Nuts" and "Out of Time"), it's secretly always been my desire to move to Renton and work in Wizards of the Coast R&D. Since I know many people share this dream and I've never seen it answered in "Ask Wizards," I thought I'd bite the bullet and ask. How does one get a job working in R&D on **Magic**?  
--Mark R., Los Angeles, CA, US

**A:** From **Alexis Janson**, Director of Human Resources:  
  
Hey Mark,  
  
That's a great question, and one we get all the time! I've been told that this is still one of the most common topics sent to Ask Wizards, outstripped only when particularly sensitive topics are covered. (I was in Customer Service during the release of the *Sixth Edition* rules changes, and the release of "*Unglued*" generated a lot of negative feedback as well.)  
  
The best way to get a job working on **Magic** is to get yourself noticed. There are many ways to go about this - write a lot of articles for a popular **Magic** strategy site, for example. One of the best routes is making consistent finishes on the Pro Tour. This is where most of our developers are pulled from. Since most of our player base is composed of serious tournament competitors, the Pro Tour is a perfect breeding ground; it cultivates many of the best traits we want to see. Our most recent R&D hire is Mike Long, off his five-event winning streak that culminated at Pro Tour - Anchorage. Welcome, Mike!  
  
Being able to consistently produce quality **Magic** articles is also a fine way to make yourself known. Jamie Wakefield, our current Director of Online Media, got his foot in the proverbial door this way. (He is also single-handedly responsible for Dinosaurs becoming the iconic green creature type.) With our ever-expanding Pro Tour schedule, we are also looking for more coverage writers. If you have a writing background, this would be a fine place to start.  
  
If you can't write, and your game isn't up to Pro-caliber levels, don't fret. There's lots of other **Magic**-related positions here in Renton. Organized Play has a variety of openings, and our Creative "team" is also looking to expand with a second employee. You can see a full list of our job openings [here](#).  
  
Hopefully, one of these opportunities calls to you. Good luck, and remember that you can't succeed without taking that first step.



[What is 'What If?' Week?](#)

February 26, 2007



**Q:** **Magic**, like all **Deckmaster** games, has the **Deckmaster** logo on the cardback. I didn't think anything of it until I did some reading and realized that **Magic** was the very first **Deckmaster** game. Suddenly it seems like putting that logo on there was a big risk. Did Richard Garfield know that **Deckmaster** would go on to be so successful?

--Bill R.

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, **Deckmaster** editor:

You're absolutely right, Bill – it was a big risk. Richard didn't have any sort of foreknowledge that the brand would take off as it did. He put the logo on the **Magic** card back because he envisioned a single brand that would unite all of Wizards' trading card games. The public bought in to the concept, and the **Deckmaster** logo has been featured on **Magic**, **Vampire: The Eternal Struggle**, **Netrunner**, **Battletech**, the ARC System games, *Hanging Chad: The Election Game*, and of course **Time Wars**.

[What is 'What If?' Week?](#)

February 23, 2007



**Q:** Several of the GDS contestants landed jobs at Wizards, but we haven't heard much from them since then. What are you guys up to in R&D? What's it like? Any funny stories?

--Various

**A:** From **Noah Weil**, **Magic** Development Intern:

Thanks for the question! What's it like to work at Wizards of the Coast? In a word: incredible. I've never in my life worked with such exceptionally intelligent and dedicated people. Everybody here is working towards the same goal, of crafting **Magic** into the best game it can be. Mark Rosewater likes to talk about crazy Gandalf v. Yoda arguments, but the most common debate I've seen in my four weeks is simply whether a given card is fun. People get extremely vocal debating how enjoyable a single card would be to the **Magic**-playing community. It's plain neat to be a part of that.

What's been most interesting to me is how careful R&D is with clashing egos. There are a lot of little rules in place to prevent people from becoming too emotionally attached to a card or an argument. For example, a call will go out to help design for a hole in the set (pretty common - this has happened three times since I've arrived). A bunch of submissions will come in, and the developers will get together and vote on which ones they like. The ones with multiple votes will be talked about further, while the rest get discarded. The only rule is that you can't vote for a card you submitted. R&D's argument, and it's a good one, is that your card should be able to stand or fall on its own merits. After all, if a team of developers aren't engaged, what chance does little Ezekiel have when he opens a booster?

But mostly I've learned how little I know about design and development. It's actually really exciting to go to work each day and know you're going to learn something new, about something you care about. After that heady stuff, you may see Aaron Forsythe rip **Pyrohemia** in the third game of our league match (grr), or see Brandon Bozzi detonate a loaded squirt gun over his computer, or you may just kill Kenneth Nagle with his own **Door to Nothingness**. I'd go on, but there's a draft in the Danger Room I need to get to...

February 22, 2007



**Q:** Several of the GDS contestants landed jobs at Wizards, but we haven't heard much from them since then. What are you guys up to in R&D? What's it like? Any funny stories?

--Various

**A:** From **Kenneth Nagle**, TCG Design Intern:

I've been designing **Magic** cards, of course! While *Future Sight* and *Tenth Edition* were locked down long before I started here one month ago, I've made both small and large contributions to the three sets following, but I won't see how the public reacts to them until *Lorwyn* releases in September 2007. That's how long it takes to properly create a **Magic** set!

One thing you learn quickly inside R&D as a Design Intern is that there are about 100 reasons to kill a **Magic** card before it sees print. The card is:

- Not fun.

- Not interesting.
- Too complex.
- Doesn't fulfill a need or there already exists an analogue in the set (maybe there's an overquota of Johnny cards).
- Has strange, unintuitive, or poor interaction with the set mechanically or with sets around it.
- No room in the set.
- The card would fit better in a different set, block, or theme.
- Rules can't handle it.
- Editing can't fit the text in the text box.
- Development kills or significantly nerfs it for any number of reasons. The card might be:
  - Overpowered.
  - Unbalanceable (some cards like my *Izzet My Turn?! and Kalachian Tempest* from the GDS are dangerous at any cost).
  - An unwanted flashpoint of a mechanic in a format (Counterspells, Discard, Land Destruction...).
  - A combo with existing cards in unfair or unfun ways.
  - A tool that makes an existing dominant archetype even more dominant (I remember just before *Darksteel's Skullclamp* was banned what it felt like seeing *Steelshaper's Gift*, *Trinket Mage*, and *Eternal Witness* in *Fifth Dawn* - it was the "Play with 16 *Skullclamps* set", yuck!).
- Creative doesn't want to support, say, a fire-breathing Goat lord.
- Illustration / card concept doesn't match or there's no time to commission one.
- The card is very divisive, causing a love/hate split in R&D, with the majority being the haters.
- The lead designer of the set hates the card.
- The head of **Magic** design hates the card.
- The vice president of **Magic** R&D hates the card.

When designing mechanics, I think best when building decks. For me, cards do not exist unless they're in a deck. Since many of us are involved in **Magic** all day, free time is spent playing other games. Ironically, I've played less actual **Magic** in the past month than I have in years. Pretty soon I'll be as bad as Mark Rosewater!

February 21, 2007



**Q:** Several of the GDS contestants landed jobs at Wizards, but we haven't heard much from them since then. What are you guys up to in R&D? What's it like? Any funny stories?

--Various

**A:** From **Graeme Hopkins**, Digital Games R&D Intern:

Dear Various,

My situation is a bit different; I'm in the R&D group (just outside of The Pit), but I am mostly working on the digital games projects. I am helping Alan Comer with the code for "Uncivilized: The Goblin Game." I am also helping to lay foundation for the prototyping of all the new digital games ideas that are floating about.

What's it like? It's loud; R&D has some powerful collective lungs. So many ideas are being tossed about so quickly, and with such intensity and conviction, that it's unlike any prior work experience I've had. I love it.

Some interesting anecdotes from my experience so far:

- The primary difference between Goblin females and males is the presence of earrings. Now I know why Goblin males are so irritable.
- Day-long meetings are much more fun when they involve conquering small Pacific islands.
- I no longer have to be sneaky about installing World of Warcraft on my work machine.
- I keep waiting for someone to walk in and ask me, "...and is playing games what we're paying you to do?", but I don't think it's going to happen.
- That stormtrooper *isn't* about to blast me every time I turn the corner. It isn't real. Seriously.

February 20, 2007



**Q:** Several of the GDS contestants landed jobs at Wizards, but we haven't heard much from them since then. What are you guys up to in R&D? What's it like? Any funny stories?

--Various

**A:** From **Mark Globus**, Digital Games Prototyper:

I've been doing great – thanks for asking! Working at Wizards is hectic in a really fun way, as there are always lots of things to do.

In less than 3 weeks of work, I have been involved with **Magic** design, **Magic** playtesting, new game prototyping, MTGO client bug fixing, new game testing, and even fraud prevention! Luckily, I like working on multiple projects at once, and so I've been having a blast.

February 19, 2007



**Q:** Several of the GDS contestants landed jobs at Wizards, but we haven't heard much from them since then. What are you guys up to in R&D? What's it like? Any funny stories?

--Various

**A:** From **Alexis Janson**, **Magic** R&D Design Intern:

The first few weeks were overwhelming. Imagine trying to catch up with a year's worth of sets in your off time. Now imagine that some of these sets are still changing on a regular basis. Now imagine having to come up with ideas that fit well into this play environment - but without actually repeating any of the cards already in the sets that you aren't yet familiar with.

Playtesting Limited seemed like it would be easy - the cards at least all say what they do, right? Playing with black and white text-only proxies takes getting used to. It's amazing how much we rely on final card titles and artwork to identify them, as well as simple things like border color. The first time you play a card and get told it does something completely different from what's actually written on it takes you by surprise, too. Constructed playtesting is even more fun, with cards written simply as brief summaries and nicknames.

With that said, working at Wizards is a blast. Sitting in the Pit is good times, listening to the crazy debates flung back and forth - not that you need to be in the pit to hear them. One day, I'm being told that playing in the Planar Chaos prerelease was a job requirement. The next, I'm sitting down to play board games with R&D VP Bill Rose. Between playtesting Magic and other games, it's easy to spend the whole day playing games - and then you realize that you're just doing your job.

February 16, 2007



**Q:** What was the art description for **Cromat**? Or, better yet, what in the world is it? Or, even better, if you timeshifted him, what creature type would he have? Thanks.

--Zac Vallejo, CA, USA

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** Creative Director:

Juno,

The art description, written by an earlier Magic Creative team, reads, "This card represents all five colors of magic - a huge, 30' dragon cool and different from any other before. Its coloration should incorporate the five Magic colors: white, blue, black, red, and green (could have prismatic wings or an oily shimmering sheen that reflects the five colors). The dragon should be shown on the ground about to take flight." Illustrator Donato Giancola was given the freedom (and the mandate!) to create a unique-looking dragon, and in my opinion, he did! According to ancient database notes, Cromat was at one point called "Xaadregaz," but its name (and subsequently its role in the story, I suspect) had to be changed to something with six letters or less in order for all its abilities to fit in the text box. What would its creature type(s) be if it were printed today? It depends on the context, I think. Dragon is the obvious answer, but depending on its setting and story context, maybe it'd be a Mutant Wurm!

February 15, 2007



**Q:** When did Dominia become Dominaria? When I started playing with Revised edition the land **Magic** took place in was called Dominia (check the flavor text on revised edition **Grizzly Bears**)... now it's Dominaria. What happened?

--Juno Napa, CA, USA

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** Creative Director:

Juno,

Despite the belief that the Dominia/Dominaria distinction is a retconned typo, my best efforts at researching the origins of these two terms indicate that they were distinct from the beginning. (They were certainly distinct by early 1995; prior to that things get very difficult to confirm.) In other words, Dominia never became Dominaria. Dominia was the name of **Magic's** multiverse, and Dominaria is an important plane at its heart. Because of the confusion caused by use of both terms, we've largely retired "Dominia," instead simply calling **Magic's** multiverse "the Multiverse."

February 14, 2007



**Q:** Okay, I think we've lived in suspense long enough. What is green's position on enchantments? It destroys them in the same vein as artifacts, but also uses and reuses them. Why does green have good auras, but also punish enchanted permanents?

--Jason Toronto, Ontario, Canada

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Head Designer:

Jason,

Green likes enchantments. It's one of the colors that has the most affinity (in the normal English usage and not the *Mirrodin* block mechanic sense) with enchantments. So why is it so good (second only to white) at destroying enchantments? Because green's ability to destroy enchantments efficiently - much like white's - stems from its familiarity with enchantments. It knows what the weaknesses of enchantments are - much the same way that blue, the most "spell" color, is the best able to stop other people's spells.

February 13, 2007



**Q:** I noticed that the Time Spiral block set names are all previously printed cards. Can you explain the thought process, connections, and flavor aspects of this decision?

--Tony Bothell, Washington, USA

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** Creative Director:

Normally, Tony, we like to name the first set in a block after the plane in which it takes place. But calling *Time Spiral* "Dominaria" wouldn't have made much sense, because many **Magic** sets have taken place on Dominaria. As you know, the set formerly known as "Snap" has lots of time-related mechanics and themes, and early in its design it had even more. When the design team locked in on nostalgia as an additional theme, the name "Time Walk" was suggested to evoke both the nostalgia and temporal themes. In the end we decided "*Time Spiral*" was more dynamic and more reflective of the chaos of the set. Then, when it came time to find names for "Crackle" and "Pop" (we don't usually name all the sets in a block at once), it seemed obvious to most that those sets should follow suit with card-title names. By then the past/present/future structure of the block was in place, and so we tried to find names to fit it. Future Sight was a cinch. But when we were told "Illusionary Presents" was cheating, we knew *Planar Chaos* would be a real challenge. In the end we couldn't find a name that clearly said, "present," but we feel that we found one that evokes what the set's identity pretty well.

February 12, 2007



**Q:** Since the *Planar Chaos* book cover's art didn't appear on a card from the set, we (me and some people at the Storyline forums) are wondering if it was a commissioned art for a card that wasn't made; or maybe the covers from the 3 books weren't made for cards and the fact that *Time Spiral's* was used for **Undying Rage** was a last-minute decision.

**A:** From **Jeremy Jarvis**, **Magic** Art Director:

We have frequent discussions between Creative, Brand and R&D about the intersection of cards, card playability, card art, and its place as relates to packaging. Example: Should all booster wrap images come from hot rare cards in the set? For *Time Spiral* the decision was made that the novel cover art could finally stop worrying about a particular card's mechanical needs and just be commissioned to suit the book as well as possible. Fast forward... *Time Spiral* art had been commissioned, Scott Fischer's packaging illustrations were in, and it was time to get approval on the direction of the packaging. The five booster wrap images had not yet been chosen, so Scott's illustrations were dropped in as temporary place holders on the booster wraps, as well as their rightful place on the respective display boxes. Upon seeing this, Brand responded very excitedly that these should be the final art selections. Scott's work is so stylish and successful that it is hard to deny that the unified use of his images across the display boxes and boosters is eye catching and very effective. There was a problem though... only four pieces (**Serra Avenger**; **Sengir Nosferatu**; **Mishra, Artificer Prodigy**; and **Bogardan Hellkite**) for five boosters. Scott was too busy to paint another card for us that we could plug into that fifth slot, so we used our only real option, which was to create a card home for his novel art. We shuffled and tweaked and made it so. So, yes, you called it, using the novel art on **Undying Rage** was a decision of necessity.

It is also worth noting that although we don't generally like to align art with a card for any reason other than that art being the best for that particular card, Creative was certainly glad to finally have a venue to show Radha in the set, since she is so central in the *Time Spiral* Novel. **Undying Rage** is her only *Time Spiral* cameo.

For *Planar Chaos* (and *Future Sight*) this model was followed... novel cover for the explicit sake of novel cover. This time, however, we learned not to use placeholder art that we couldn't deliver on.

There you have it!  
JJ

February 9, 2007



**Q:** As I looked at the new cards in *Planar Chaos* (which are awesome), I began to wonder what thought process the Creative Team used in relation to what creature types (Elves, Kavu, ect.) would go into the set. Do you just go with the popular types? Or do go by what types have not been used in a while?  
--Bob Austin, Texas, USA

**A:** From **Doug Beyer**, Creative Team

Hi Bob,

That's a big question! I'm going into two main areas in my answer, but be aware that there are tons of corner cases and counterexamples that are too numerous for the scope of this question. Any particular creature type decision can have many motivating factors, so I'm just hitting the highlights here.

First, the creature types in a set depend on the decisions that go into the world-building for that setting. For example, it was important that the plane of *Ravnica* have the cosmopolitan, melting-pot feel of a vast city, and that it communicate a sense that organization and philosophy (i.e., guilds) had more importance for social categorization than race. So the creative team went wild with creature types in *Ravnica* Block -- humans, elves, spirits, viashino, vedalken, centaurs, elementals, gargoyles, ogres, griffins, sphinxes, vampires, frogs, weirds -- I could go on. The plane of *Kamigawa*, on the other hand, had one central conflict of kami (Spirits) vs. mortals (Humans and a few other types), so to reinforce this dichotomy, there number of different creature types in *Kamigawa* Block was relatively small. Sometimes races go away for a couple blocks and then return -- such as the re-emergence of loxodons in *Ravnica: City of Guilds* -- which helps preserve the coolness of those races and keeps players guessing about what will happen next. *Time Spiral* is set in post-apocalyptic Dominaria with the added feature of history-twisting time rifts, so just about any creature type from many earlier blocks is fair game for this block. Taken together, all these sorts of world-building decisions help give a setting its identity, and help ensure that any given world is distinguishable from the next.

Second, a set's selection of creature types depends on mechanical concerns. There are almost always a broad variety of sizes, colors, and abilities across a new set's creature base, so a rule of thumb is that a plane has to be able to support logically that kind of diversity with its creature types. *Mirrodin* Block, for example, is set on the plane of *Mirrodin*, home to humans (subtype Human), leonin (Cat), and loxodons (Elephant), among many

other races. Smallish white creatures in that block tend to be leonin or human, whereas most larger white creatures are conceptualized as loxodons -- it's a simple example, but it shows how the creature types allowed for the mechanics of the set. Furthermore, mechanics that depend on creature type have special consideration. Creature types matter for the mechanics of cards like *Goblin Warchief*, *Krovikan Mist*, or *Thelon of Havenwood*; in cases like these, creative works with design and development to be sure that the intent of the mechanics is preserved while still jiving with the flavor of the setting.

So why is any particular creature type decision made? Why are there no Kavus cards, for example, in *Mirrodin* Block? The flavorful answer is simply that there aren't any kavu on the plane of *Mirrodin*. The mechanical answer is that there were no cards that required mechanical links or tribal interactions with Kavus, so their role of "medium-sized green or red creature" was filled by other creature types that were more compatible with the setting. There are as many answers as there are creature types, Bob, but broadly speaking, it always comes down to a combination of flavor and mechanics.

February 8, 2007



**Q:** I think *Akroma, Angel of Fury* is a nice card balancing out how red dislikes white and blue. The thing that got to me is that *Akroma, Angel of Wrath* dislikes black and red. But for some reason I never see green involved in these pairs. It looks like green never wants to be involved, is it because there are an uneven number of colors? Or do they have to deal with artifacts?

--Son Hillside, IL, USA

**A:** From **Alexis Janson**, Magic Design Intern

Son,

Mechanically, protection and damage prevention naturally lend themselves to being color-aligned. Flavorfully, once you've made a white card "righteous" enough to stop black, it's logical to make it also stop red. This naturally leads to white having the largest number of cards that are better against either of its enemies.

Outside of white, cards that work against both enemies are pretty evenly distributed. There are four cycles of double-hoser cards -- in *Coldsnap*, *Mercadian Masques*, *Mirage*, and *Alliances*. By my count, white has an additional 11 double-hosers, whereas black has five, red has three, and green and blue have two each.

Once you start looking at cards that work against a single color, things get muddier. It does appear that anti-green cards number relatively low. My instinct tells me this is because green's enemies don't need to hose green specifically- black would rather just kill "any" creature and blue would rather just bounce any permanent or counter any spell. Protection from green is also less interesting, because the other four colors have more creature removal, so protection will stop a range of creatures and spells. Protection from green just has a smaller range of applications.

February 7, 2007



**Q:** Why was Mountain the only basic land included in the *Arabian Nights* set? --Dean Detroit, MI, USA

**A:** From **Mike Turian**, Magic R&D:

Hey Dean,

The original plan for *Arabian Nights* was to give Magic cards new backs. The early designers felt that each Magic set should be a unique experience. You would be able to play the cards with one another but the different card back would allow for players to distinguish each set from one another.



If *Arabian Nights* was going to have different backs then they thought they should include each of the five basic lands into the packs so that you could play a game without marked lands.

Skaff Elias stepped in, as he was appalled by the idea. He correctly identified the problem that if you give cards different backs then you could tell what card you were about to draw. Imagine playing a card game where each suit had its own back — totally ridiculous.

Eventually everyone came around to Skaff's viewpoint and the backs were going to be the traditional Magic card back. *Arabian Nights* no longer needed basic lands to be included in the packs. Since production sheets had been created, the lands were manually removed from the sheet. One instance of Mountain was skipped and made it into the set by accident.

February 6, 2007



**Q:** I noticed in the sortable spoiler that there are no timeshifted artifacts in PC, or any at all, for that matter. I wonder: why were there no artifacts printed for this set, and more importantly, why no timeshifted artifacts?  
--Rhazna Taura'an Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

**A:** From **Devin Low**, *Planar Chaos* lead designer:

Good question. Here's the answer: *Planar Chaos* is all about shifting classic **Magic** abilities into new colors. Artifacts don't have a color, so they can't really be color-shifted. When you think about it, they don't even make a lot of sense in that theme. So the *Planar Chaos* design and development teams eliminated all artifact slots to get more slots for the colors and for gold cards. The one nod to color-shifting artifacts is moving the *Antiquities* artifact rare **Primal Clay** into blue as the common **Primal Plasma**.

February 5, 2007



**Q:** Wrath of God has been in every core set, and I would assume that its presence has affected, directly or indirectly, the power level of each and every creature and the viability of other removal spells. If Wrath of God had not been printed in Alpha, had not been reprinted in subsequent sets, had cost a mana or two more, or had originally been printed in a different color, how much different **Magic** look today?  
--G Fisher Charlottesville, VA, USA

**A:** From **Randy Buehler**, Vice President of Digital Gaming:

I have no idea. Anytime you mess with Alpha there's always the Butterfly Effect possibility.... The whole world could change because of it. Maybe **Magic** never caught on and the resulting lack of entertainment options plunged the world into nuclear war. Or maybe the increased happiness of people piloting creature decks would have gone up by so much that we'd now have world peace. My best guess is that we'd have slightly less aggressive weenies and slightly less exciting fatties, and that would all make blue even better than it already is.

February 2, 2007



**Q:** I found this entry on a popular website for Zuran Orb:  
"Standard (Type 2) tournaments (see Rule 804) have banned this card since 1997/01/01 when it left the environment. It was previously restricted from 1995/11/01 to 1997/01/01, and banned from 1997/07/01 through 1997/11/01 when Ice Age temporarily became legal again."

Is this true? Did Ice Age leave Standard for 7 months, then come back for 4? What happened in 1997 with Standard?

--Eric

**A:** From **Scott Larabee**, DCI Program Manager:

Eric,

This is true. *Ice Age* did leave Standard from January 1997 to June 1997, reappeared in Standard from July 1997 to October 1997, then left Standard for good in November 1997. Here's what happened...

In January 1997, the DCI introduced a new rotation policy for Standard. Up to that time, the Standard format had consisted of "the largest set of currently available cards." There was no real rotation policy – the DCI simply announced when a set would leave Standard. The new rotation policy stated that "base sets" (e.g., *Fourth Edition*) and "stand-alone expansions" (e.g., *Ice Age*, *Mirage*) would leave the Standard format after a new base set or stand-alone expansion was released. "Limited Edition expansions" (e.g., *Alliances*, *Homelands*, *Visions*) would leave the Standard format after about 1 year.

With institution of this new policy, the DCI also announced that *Fallen Empires* and *Ice Age* were to leave the Standard format, the reason being *Fallen Empires* had been out for over 1 year and *Mirage* had already been released – kicking *Ice Age* out of the format. This raised quite a hue and cry from players and organizers. One big reason was that *Alliances* was still legal in Standard, but the snow-covered lands needed for many of the *Alliances* cards were no longer Standard legal due to *Ice Age* leaving the format.

Given these complaints, the DCI decided to revise the policy once again. The new policy introduced in July 1997 is the Standard rotation policy that we have today. Standard would consist of the 2 most recent blocks, plus the most recent base set. In July 1997, the 2 most recent blocks were *Ice Age-Homelands-Alliances* and *Mirage-Visions-Weatherlight*. So *Ice Age* was back in Standard.

With the release of *Tempest* in October 1997, The *Ice Age* block rotated out of Standard in November 1997 to be replaced by the new Rath Block (starting with *Tempest*).

Got all that? Good. There will be a quiz next period.

February 1, 2007



**Q:** This one is for MaRo. I think it's awesome that you read all of your e-mails every day. I was wondering, how many do you usually get and how long does it actually take you to read them? Also, about what percentage do you respond to? Hope this is one of them!

--Martin Pittsburgh, PA, USA

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater, Magic** Head Designer:

Martin,

On a slow day with no pressing issue I can have as few as double digits. On a busy day with a pressing issue that has everyone in a tizzy, I've had as many as quadruple digits. The former takes a day or two to read while the latter can take weeks. How many letters do I respond to? Probably anywhere from a handful to a few dozen each week, a small percentage of the mail I receive.

I hope an Ask Wizards answer counts as a response.



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