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# Shuffle Up for Summer

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 The Week That Was  
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A funny thing happened on the way to the theme week...a couple of weeks back it was Choose Your Own Theme week here at **Magicthegathering.com**. I usually don't have to be on theme due the nature of the column, and when I am, it is usually creatively off-theme. I attempted to play with that by pretending my theme week was about Summer Magic, referencing the highly desirable recalled *Revised* set that featured a blue Hurricane, and that I was going off theme by writing about this summer's **Magic** events.

The joke ended up being on me as my editor put the kibosh on my opening because of the upcoming Summer of **Magic** promotion. He was concerned about creating confusion and I ended up not choosing a theme for Choose Your Own Theme Week—which seemed rather appropriate in retrospect. But it did get me curious about the Summer of **Magic**, which is tied to the release of *Tenth Edition* and **Worldwide Magic Game Day** which you might be curious to know has more than 2,100 stores signed up in across the world (including 1,000 in North America alone!) as this column goes to publish.

I don't know if you have looked through the plans for **Game Day** yet, but as a **Magic** fan they have me pretty excited. The events look like they are going to provide a perfect starting point for new players. If there are people out there who have been watching **Magic** from the sidelines but haven't found the opportunity to learn the game, this will be the ideal convergence of demo-ers and demo-ees. That may not seem like something significant to an experienced player but **Magic** has never really had an outreach program like this—and the potential influx of new players should have retailers, tournament organizers, and local groups of players of every stripe ready and waiting.

Personally I am eager for mini-master tournaments at my local Game Day event. I don't know if you have played in this format before, but it is one of my favorites. Each player gets a booster pack and 15 lands (three of each type). You shuffle the two stacks together and play. Back when I played this, we played single-elimination and for keeps. After winning a round you would take your opponent's cards and lands, shuffle them into your deck, and play the next round. Rinse and repeat.

This format had never been embraced by Wizards of the Coast before because they didn't want anyone taking anyone else's cards. They solved the problem rather neatly by having the winner of the each round advance and restart with a new "deck"—that is to say, you keep your land but you swap in a new booster for your other 15 cards, rather than taking the cards from the person they beat. It's a win-win situation where everyone walks away with at least the cards they got when they entered the tournament and everyone has fun seeing what cards were included in the base set this time around.

For players who are looking for something more akin to a traditional tournament experience, there are of course Sealed Deck tournaments. More importantly there is a more casual league format available that should appeal to players new to the game (and organized play in general) in which participants build a deck out of five boosters of the new release and then look for other players, each of which is carrying a scorecard. Matches are marked off on the card—one mark for a loss and two for a win—and the four players with the most marks at the end of the allotted time win prizes.

There are a ton of great prizes to be won, from booster packs, card boxes, deck boxes, backpacks, and life counters. If you're in North America, there's a **Scavenger Hunt** with a list of 30 obscure (and some not-so-obscure) objects to bring in to win a Magic backpack. Also for North American players, there's a sweepstakes to **win a trip to the 2007 World Championships** in New York City. The European events team outdid themselves in Paris last year, so you can be sure their stateside counterparts are equally focused on pulling out all the stops to make Worlds an amazing experience, with tons of stuff to do and events to play in.

All in all, July 14th should be a great kick-off to the Summer of **Magic**. The full plan hasn't been unveiled yet, but I can tell you that it should get you playing lots of **Magic** over the coming months. Check back here over the next few weeks for more information and hopefully an interview or two on the topic.

## Summer in San Diego

### MAGIC GAME DAY LOCATIONS

If you're not in one of these stores on July 14, we're not sure you'll be allowed to call yourself a **Magic** player anymore.

- [North America](#)
- [Latin America](#)
- [Europe](#)
- [Italy](#)
- [France](#)
- [Russia](#)
- [Great Britain & Ireland](#)
- [Asia](#)
- [Australia & New Zealand](#)

PRODUCTS

**MAGIC** ONLINE  
**V3 BETA**  
 Thursday 10/11  
 4pm - 7pm PST  
 Draft for Free!

MAGIC ONLINE

**MAGIC** The Gathering  
 ONLINE

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Magic General Forum  
 magicthegathering.com Forum

RULES

**RULES**

If you happen to be in San Diego next weekend, you can get a jumpstart on the Summer of **Magic** by checking out the [Pro Tour over at the Convention Center](#). One of the last times we were in San Diego for a major event was U.S. Nationals 2003, and it was one of the most enthusiastic crowds I can recall outside of a European Grand Prix. I expect next weekend to be no different.



Whether you want to come and just watch from the rails of the feature match area to see a potential matchup of Kenji Tsumura and Jon Finkel—yes, Jon is going to be at the event—and get your favorite Pro Player cards signed or play in side events, there should be plenty to do and see. You can find the [schedule of events here](#) but let me call out some of the highlights:

- **Last Chance Qualifier – Pro Tour–San Diego, 2HG Sealed Deck**

You could win the very last opportunities to qualify for your chance at over \$240,000 in cash prizes and test your skills against the world's finest.

- **iPod Open – Standard Constructed**



Just pore over [Mike Flores's](#) and [Frank Karsten's](#) articles from the past few days and select the best weapons the Regionals field has put forth to win an 80GB iPod. There is also a 2HG tournament during the weekend that will pay out two iPods to the winning team. Another tournament during the weekend will award a digital camera. (I may try and win that just to upgrade the dusty old one in the Grand Prix kit!) There is yet another that is offering a laptop for the winner.

- **"Old Box" Sealed**

There are a handful of tournaments throughout the weekend which will pay out with boxes of out-of-print booster boxes, including a choice between a box of *Urza's Saga* and *Urza's Legacy*.

- **Dual Land Open – Legacy Constructed**

Have you wondered what Legacy looks like without the dreaded Hulk-Flash combo? Well, here is your chance with 30 dual lands being given away. This should be a pretty good indicator of what the format looks like in the wake of Columbus and the subsequent bannings.

- **Super FNM – Time Spiral Sealed**

It is raining foils for this tournament, which was created to support local stores who might otherwise lose their FNM crowd to the Pro Tour scene. Everyone who enters will receive a **Goblin Legionnaire** for signing up and anyone with four wins will get to cherry pick another eight FNM foils, as well as entry into any side event on the weekend. Players with two or three wins will also get to hand pick foils from the cards available on site.

- **"Generic" Grand Prix Trial – Standard Constructed**

This is basically a coupon worth three byes at ANY Grand Prix for the coming year. I hope to see more of these tournaments in wider circulation in the future. This is the best innovation I have seen for the Grand Prix Trial since the introduction of this class of tournaments.

- **Pro Tour Qualifier – Valencia – Time Spiral Block Constructed**

And of course if you come to the Pro Tour and like what you see, you can always try to qualify for the next one. It is hard to imagine many places nicer than San Diego but if the scouting reports from the Events team are to be believed, Valencia has it soundly trounced in just about every category.

## Five Questions: San Diego Prep Work

Of course, the feature attraction in San Diego is going to be seeing how the best players in world tackle a new format that has never been used at this level of competition before—Two-Headed Giant. While there have been a couple of 2HG Grand Prix tournaments, they featured one day of Sealed Deck. The Pro Tour is all about drafting, with teams picking new cards every two rounds. I caught up with a handful of players to gauge their preparation, thoughts on the format, and whether they play or draw. Participating in this Five Questions/Roundtable hybrid were 2005 U.S. National Champion Antonino De Rosa, Fanatic hopeful Rich Hoan, Pro Tour–Los Angeles 1998-99 winner Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz, 2005 Invitational winner Terry Soh, Pro Tour–Seattle winner Jeroen Remie, and first-ballot Hall of Famer Jon Finkel.



### 1. What is your team for the Pro Tour and how did you qualify?

**Antonino:** Ken Ho—the least famous Pro Tour champion of all time. He stopped playing but since he is my roommate and I know how good he is I forced him to come to the team PTs the last two years. We got in on MY levels:).

**Rich:** Jelger Wiegersma. 10 levels.

**Steve OMS:** Me and Wang, winning Grand Prix–Massachusetts.

**Terry:** I qualified in a PTQ with my brother, Joe Soh.

**Jeroen:** My teammate is Victor van den Broek, we qualified by getting 8th at Grand Prix—Amsterdam, and after that double qualified by winning a PTQ.

**Jon:** I'm playing with Josh Ravitz and we qualified due to the HoF.

## **2. What are you doing to prepare for the event? Who else is working with you?**

**Antonino:** We have done about 20-30 drafts already after work. We have eight separate teams that live in this area, and we draft after work: Me and Ken, Dave Humphreys and Justin Gary, Ben Seck and Jeff Liu, Patrick Sullivan and Sam Stein, Ben Rubin and Adam Chambers, Mike Girard and Anthony Shaheen (co-workers who randomly won a PTQ), and John Fiorillo and Eugene Harvey.

**Rich:** At Heezy's with Ruud Warmenhoven, Gerry Thompson, Pat Chapin, Erik Thoren, Suds, Mitchell Tamblin, and Ben Farkas for a week.

**Steve OMS:** I'm just trying to get as many drafts in as possible to evaluate my drafting strategy, to see if I'm on the right path or need to rethink and re-evaluate cards. I'm working with all of the guys from the drafts at Finkel's who Q'd and a few who are just helping us test.

**Terry:** Basically, my exam had just ended, so we're gonna start drafting pretty soon!

**Jeroen:** We are basically already done with our testing, as we don't think we can learn very much more by doing more drafts. We basically drafted two or three days a week for a month, with Frank Karsten, Roel van Heeswijk, Rogier Maaten, Jelger Wiegersma, Quentin Martin and Ruud Warmenhoven.

**Jon:** I have been playing some 2HG with Matt Wang, the OMS brothers, Chris Manning, Eric Berger, and Igor Frayman.

## **3. How different is the 2HG draft format from Sealed Deck? What do you think of the format overall?**

**Antonino:** I think the format is way different. If you plan to draft the same way you draft in single Magic you will lose. I really like the format. You can get some really funky decks and we get to see many cards get played that otherwise would never get played.

**Rich:** Not at all, they both suck.

**Steve OMS:** 2HG is very different in how the games are played out and what really matters to enable a team to win a game. This effects the ranking of cards and draft strategy, some of it is obvious, the higher value of storm and discard, but some of it isn't and takes some testing to figure it out. Overall I like the format—one-game rounds aren't exactly ideal though, but its fun.

**Terry:** I think the format will be pretty slow, although sliver decks can come out pretty fast.

**Jeroen:** When we started we thought that it was very similar, you just take the two best cards in each pack and make yourself a sealed pool and then build decks, but now that we have tested more we found that this really isn't the case. Card evaluation is very important, and so is keeping track of what your plans are and which colors you want to be. I think it is actually pretty skill-intensive and not that bad a format.

**Jon:** Well I have no idea what the sealed deck format is like, but I'll assume that the draft is infinitely better, because it always is. I think the format is actually a much better format than I had thought initially. The only downside is that the matches are one game instead of two out of three, but with the time constraints of a tournament that's how it has to be.

## **4. How much will preparation for this tournament be rewarded? Is that any different from any other tournament?**

**Antonino:** I think this format will reward preparation more than any other format. There are no random bad things that can happen to you like they can happen to you when you're very prepared for a regular Constructed or draft Pro Tour.

**Rich:** A lot. No.

**Steve OMS:** I think teams need to prepare to break old drafting habits. Without testing you're just going to treat the draft like a normal individual draft which isn't optimal. This is different because it's a new format, normally when testing draft you just need to learn the new cards now you need to learn cards and a new format.

**Terry:** It's a Pro Tour, is there anything else more rewarding?

**Jeroen:** I think preparation will be rewarded about the same. On the one hand you have the randomness of the format, where a mulligan or two will just end up losing you the round—which is awful, by the way—but on the other hand by testing I feel we did create a pretty big edge—bigger than normal—over random teams who haven't tested and are under the impression that the format is random anyways. I think that evens out.

**Jon:** Preparation is very necessary here because of how the card values change so much between regular draft and 2HG. It's not like some other draft formats where you could show up with a few drafts under your belt and

***"We have done about 20-30 drafts already after work. We have eight separate teams that live in this area, and we draft after work."-- Antonino De Rosa***

***"Card evaluation is very important, and so is keeping track of what your plans are and which colors you want to be. I think it is actually pretty skill-intensive."-- Jeroen Remie***

knowledge of the cards in the format.

### 5. What do you think about playing vs. drawing?

**Antonino:** I can't give that away, one is way better than the other and I just hope others haven't figured it out.

**Rich:** It isn't close, but not everyone will know which way they should go.

**Steve OMS:** I'm a believer in the value of playing and smashing and gaining tempo advantage rather than the extra card from drawing

**Terry:** I think playing first is the norm and that has not changed in any format, especially in a format filled with suspends and Thallid guys

**Jeroen:** During all our testing we have been keeping track to see what has been winning most, and it is about even, so I don't think it is that big of a factor. Opening hands will decide if you win a ROUND, not a game, so those are way more important than playing or drawing. We have decided that its pretty deck dependent, leaning a bit more to the playing side.

**Jon:** I am still unsure. In general we play, though I think that could be wrong.

## Invitational Results: Your New Resident Genius

The Louvre lovers have spoken and Guillaume Wafo-Tapa is the 2007 [Resident Genius](#) with more than 40 percent of the vote. This week's ballot is The Fanatic and you can find the profiles and virtual ballot boxes [here](#), or just click on that big button to the right.



## Firestarter: Game Day

Will you be attending your local **Magic** Game Day? If so, which event will you be taking part in; the League play, the Sealed Deck, the mini-master, or some combination of them all? Head to the forums and talk about your plans for the *Tenth Edition* release.

*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](#), the publishing house that is releasing Michael J. Flores: Deckade.*



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