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Two Plus Two

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 Making Magic
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In interviews and in this very column I have given some clues about what *Lorwyn* has in store. My biggest and most cryptic clue is that *Lorwyn* is going to break a rule we've never broken before in the fourteen years we've been making **Magic**. A big rule. Something that will make this block unlike any other.

How big? So big that later this month we have to tell our distributors because it's going to affect how they order the next year's worth of sets. What does us telling our distributors have to do with anything? Well, once the news goes out to our distributors, we know that the cat will be out of the proverbial bag. So we decided to tell all of you before we tell our distributors (okay, maybe one or two of them read my column). That's what I'll be doing today: spilling *Lorwyn* block's biggest secret. I'm guessing most of you didn't expect that when you turned in.



Do You Want to Know a Secret?

All right. Why don't I start with a little quiz? I've hidden the rest of the articles' text as to let you guess before reading on.

Ready?

How many sets are going to be released between September 2007 and August 2008?

Click [here](#).

Four.

Okay, that one wasn't so hard. We've been putting out four sets a year for the last five years (core set, *Unhinged*, core set, *Coldsnap*, core set were the fourth sets for each of the last five years), so if you were paying attention you should have figured that one out. Which leads to the next question.

How many blocks are we releasing between September 2007 and August 2008?

Click [here](#).

Two.

That's one I was hoping you didn't see coming. This, of course, is the big twist. Next "year" (I'm talking in **Magic** years) there will be two mini-blocks each consisting of one large set and one small set (exact sizes will be announced later). The large sets will act like large sets (they'll both have tournament packs for example) and the small sets will act like small sets. Each block will have its own theme, its own mechanics, and its own Creative. So next year is comprised of two unconnected blocks? I wouldn't say unconnected.

To explain this let me take you on a little tangent on how this block came together in the first place. A few years back we decided that we wanted to put out four sets a year. The core sets have been coming out biannually for quite a while so we were essentially already doing four sets a year half the time. To fill in the "off" years, we started doing one-of projects like *Unhinged* or *Coldsnap*. I mentioned to Randy and Bill (at the time Randy was the Director of **Magic**, the title Aaron Forsythe now holds, and Bill was and still is VP of R&D) that I felt we could design a four-set year where all four sets were part of a single organic whole. Bill and Randy basically said, "Sounds good. Get on that."

I began my brainstorming assuming that it would be a four-set block, but the more I looked into it the more I realized the uphill battle I was fighting. Traditionally, with a few exceptions, we've struggled to stretch blocks out to three sets. Getting to four seemed next to impossible. So I asked myself if there was a way to have a four-set block that wasn't four sets. This might sound like a crazy question, but it forced me to approach the problem from a different vantage point. I realized that there was a way. Instead of one



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four-set block, we could have two two-set blocks.

The two mini-blocks wouldn't be created in a vacuum. Rather the opposite would be true. With this block plan, the two blocks could be designed together. And remember as I stated back in [my first State of Design column](#), one of my goals when I took over as Head Designer was to create greater synergy between blocks. But here was the challenge. While I wanted the two blocks to be synergistic and interconnected they also had to be distinct. So I laid down the following rules:

1. The two blocks had to have their own themes. Each block had to be about something different. The two themes could play nicely with one another, but it was crucial that each block have its own identity.
2. The mechanics could not overlap. Each block had to have its own mechanics with its own keywords. Yes, the mechanics could go into the same decks, but each block had to bring something different to the table.
3. Each block had to have its own Creative. You should be able to tell the blocks apart solely by looking at the creative elements (art, name and flavor text). This doesn't mean the two worlds can't be connected in some way, but each had to have a look and feel that was its own.

As both *Ravnica* and *Time Spiral* blocks demonstrated I have no qualms with throwing big challenges at my design teams. For *Lorwyn*, I simply wanted two blocks that were uniquely distinct yet intimately synergistic. Was that too much to ask? (Obviously no, as my designers kick some proverbial you-know-what.)

Codename that Tune

As a tangent to my tangent, I wanted to quickly share a little story. So, long before we knew what we were doing, the *Lorwyn* block had been codenamed "Peanut," "Butter," and "Jelly." I even outed the codenames in a column ([Today and Tomorrow](#)), making them public knowledge. When I realized that the block was going to have four sets in it (this was before I came up with the two mini-block plan) I was under the gun to come up with a codename for the fourth set. My clever solution was to call the set "Sandwich."



And so we did. For a while anyway. But as the idea of doing two mini-blocks came about, the **Magic** Brand team suggested that perhaps the "Sandwich" codename was inappropriate, as it implied a four-set block when in fact it was two two-set blocks. I didn't personally think it mattered, but Brand seemed to care. They suggested we change "Jelly" and "Sandwich" to two other codenames, most likely two things that went together. Here I had a problem. For starters we'd already told the world that the third set in the block was named "Jelly." Yes, R&D had called the fourth one "Sandwich," but we had never publicly told anyone that. Plus, the two mini-block idea was a big secret. Codenames often get out. The last thing we wanted was for the codenames to give away the secret of the block.

My suggestion was to change "Sandwich" to "Doughnut." That way each mini-block would have its own connected codenames ("Peanut" / "Butter" and "Jelly" / "Doughnut") but we would still be able to keep the illusion of a normal three-set block alive. Plus, it meant that we had never publicly given a false codename. The other fun side benefit of "Doughnut" was that whenever the designers were asked to fill a hole created by development, we got to go "Mmm, Doughnut holes."

Inquiring Minds

With my tangents out of the way it's time to answer some questions.

How exactly is limited going to work?

For the purposes of limited the *Lorwyn* and "Jelly" blocks are treated like two distinct blocks. For example, here's how draft will work.

Lorwyn comes out: *Lorwyn* / *Lorwyn* / *Lorwyn*

Morningtide comes out: *Lorwyn* / *Lorwyn* / *Morningtide*

"Jelly" comes out: "Jelly" / "Jelly" / "Jelly"

"Doughnut" comes out: "Jelly" / "Jelly" / "Doughnut"

If you want to try out *Lorwyn* / *Morningtide* / "Jelly" or *Lorwyn* / *Morningtide* / "Jelly" / "Doughnut" no one's going to stop you (and personally I think they might be fun), but these will be the Limited formats Organized Play supports.

So how exactly is Constructed going to work?

This is where things get a little strange. For purposes of Constructed you want to think of the two mini-blocks as one über-block. This means that, one, the *Lorwyn* mini-block and the "Jelly" mini-block will rotate out of formats at the same time. *Time Spiral*, for instance, will rotate out of Standard when "Rock" (the block after *Lorwyn* and "Jelly" is codenamed "Rock" / "Paper" / "Scissors") rotates in, not when "Jelly" rotates in. And two, *Lorwyn*, *Morningtide*, "Jelly" and "Doughnut" will all be together in the same Block Constructed format.

When will the four sets come out?

Roughly the same time as the four sets this year. The big change isn't when the sets come out as much as having a large set at the opposite time of the year from when players have grown to expect it.

Can you tell us what the themes of the blocks are?

Lorwyn block is three months away and "Jelly" block is over six months away, so no.

Can you tell us about the new card type?

Other than how awesome it is? No.

Two, Two Mints in One

That's the big news of the day. I hope this whets your appetite for what the *Lorwyn* and "Jelly" blocks have to offer. I'm quite proud of how they've both turned out and I'm as eager as anyone to see you all play with the cards.

Join me next week for a column that's XXX.

Mark Rosewater



*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he's in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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