

Year Three of the Hall of Fame presents the toughest questions yet. Time for a New Class

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This scene certainly played out at multiple locations two years ago...**Magic** fan looks at new [MagicPro Tour Hall of Fame](#). **Magic** fan looks to see who's eligible each year. **Magic** fan's jaw drops when looking at the gargantuan talent assembled on the Year Three ballot. After two years of constant debate, the time has arrived to sort out the stars.

"Don't ask me who I am going to be voting for...I just don't know yet," said Scott Larabee in a preemptive strike when asked to talk about this year's Hall of Fame class and some of the rules changes that have been put into place. The anxiety Scott is feeling about his ballot is shared throughout **Magic** as ballots go out this week with only five spots to fill and a star-studded roster of players becoming eligible for the first time.

New Rules

Scott was willing to discuss some of the new rules that have been put into place for this third Hall of Fame voting process. Each year there is a shuffle of the committees that vote for the Hall of Fame with people changing jobs, shifting roles within and without Wizards, taking into consideration whether or not people are qualified observers for the period of time in question, and a general refinement of the process from year to year.



Kai and Nico, facing each other here in the final of Pro Tour-Chicago 2003, are part of the loaded Year Three ballot.

Last year introduced two distinct voting bodies; one which drew from Wizards employees, Pro Tour commentators and columnists, and industry observers; and another which included every player with 100 lifetime Pro Points. The [Players Committee](#) features players who are currently eligible for the Hall or will become eligible once they are 10 years out from their first Pro Tour appearance. As for the players who have already been inducted into the Hall, they become part of the [Selection Committee](#). "We have made some changes to the Selection Committee for various reasons—even in a couple of cases where people didn't respond last year," explained Scott. "We also added quite a few new people to the Selection Committee—around 13 people—including the five new Hall of Fame members from last year."

While those two bodies and the way their votes are counted has remained consistent with how they were introduced last year, there was at least one significant change made to the voting process as 20 new players join the 43 holdovers from the first two ballots.

"The big change is that you can be removed from the ballot," Scott revealed. "The reason we are doing this is to make sure that the ballot does not get too big. For the people who get few or no votes we want to figure out a way to not only take them off the ballot, but allow them to get back on."

When the ballots are returned this year, anyone from the first year's class who has never appeared on at least 10 percent of at least one of the first three years' of ballots will be removed from future ballots. Next year, the players from the first two ballots will fall under the same scrutiny, and so on. But falling off the ballot is far from final.

"A player can be reinstated by receiving four Pro Points during a year's span that runs roughly from July 1 to June 30," said Scott. "So if someone is able to qualify and play in two Pro Tours, then they are back on the ballot and the whole process resets."

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Class of 2005

- [Alan Comer](#)
- [Jon Finkel](#)
- [Darwin Kastle](#)
- [Tommi Hovi](#)
- [Olle Råde](#)

Class of 2006

- [Rob Dougherty](#)
- [Dave Humpherys](#)
- [Raphaël Lévy](#)
- [Bob Maher](#)
- [Gary Wise](#)

"Why isn't Kai in the Hall of Fame?"

With more than \$300,000 in lifetime winnings, a staggering seven Pro Tour victories, and every other shape and size of award in his trophy case back in Germany, it has confused many forum posters over the course of the first two classes as to why the German Juggernaut had not been enshrined with the game's greats.

The reason was pretty simple... he did not become eligible until this year. Players do not become eligible for the Hall until they have amassed 100 Pro Points—something Kai has done three times over—and 10 seasons have passed since they played in their first Pro Tour. Not even Kai could overcome that hurdle, but it is probably a safe bet to say that when the 2007 Hall of Fame class steps onto the dais at the World Championships in New York City, Kai will be among them.

Without further ado, here's the 2007 Magic Pro Tour Hall of Fame ballot:

David Bachmann	Itaru Ishida	Jin Okamoto
Trevor Blackwell	Scott Johns	Chris Pikula
Noah Boeken	Mattias Jorstedt	David Price
Kai Budde	Mark Justice	Michael Pustilnik
Randy Buehler	Brian Kibler	Neil Reeves
Kurt Burgner	Benedikt Klauser	Shawn "The Hammer" Regnier
Daniel Clegg	André Konstanczer	Kyle Rose
Sigurd Eskeland	Gary Krakower	Ben Rubin
Igor Frayman	Peer Kroeger	Brian Selden
Osamu Fujita	Janosch Kühn	Alex Shvartsman
Tsuyoshi Fujita	John Larkin	Jakub Slemr
Ryan Fuller	Mark Le Pine	Bram Snepvangers
Donald Gallitz	Peter Leiher	Gabriel Tsang
Justin Gary	Matt Linde	Terry Tsang
Svend Geertsen	Raffaele Lo Moro	Michael Turian
Thomas Guevin	Michael Long	Trey Van Cleave
Brian Hacker	Pierre Malherbaud	Tom van de Logt
Yann Hamon	Casey McCarrel	Matthew Vienneau
Nicolai Herzog	Zvi Mowshowitz	Tomi Walamies
Masami Ibamoto	Satoshi Nakamura	David Williams
Tsuyoshi Ikeda	Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz	

The big question that remains is who will be standing by his side on that stage. It is a question that first-year Hall of Famer Alan Comer has to do his part to answer along with everyone else who will be receiving a ballot to be cast in early August.

"This year's ballot is pretty insane," marveled Alan as he looked over a roster of players that has more players he would like to see in the Hall than he has votes to cast. "I would not want to be competing with these people. I don't think I would make it in this year... it's nuts."

Of course, Alan never thought he would get elected in the first place, as he had a long history of not

YEAR THREE STATISTICS

Wondering how good the incoming players of this class are? Eight players have won more than \$100,000 in lifetime winnings. There are 16 Pro Tour titles, 51 Pro Tour Top 8s, 109 Grand Prix Top 8s, and total earnings of more than \$2 million.

Here's a statistical breakdown of the "average" candidate added in Year Three:

- Average Pro Points: 192.3
- Average Lifetime Winnings: \$106,302.42
- Average Pro Tour Top 8s: 2.63
- Average Grand Prix Top 8s: 5.52

[Click here](#) for a statistical breakdown of the 2007 Class.

winning ballots (such as the Magic Invitational) over the years.

"Wow, this would be cool but I will never make it," Alan recalled thinking when the first ballots were sent out. "I never thought I had a chance and I was stunned when I got in. I thought, 'Oh look another vote that I can lose!' But if you are going to win one, this is the one to win!"

Personally I have still not settled my ballot beyond Kai at this point, with six players all jockeying for those remaining berths at Worlds. There are so many criteria to take into consideration. Voters this year will be faced with many difficult decisions about how to weigh the length of careers, measure the nebulous "contributions to the game," put historic firsts into context, and find some way to account for long-dead premier event programs like the Junior Pro Tour, the Masters Series, Extended Championships, and European and APAC Championships. And that just scratches the surface of the accomplishments the players on this year's ballot have amassed.

"It is going to be difficult," agreed Scott with a smile that said he was looking forward to rolling up his sleeves and sorting it all out. "I have only looked over the names and have not begun researching the stats. Beyond Kai I don't know yet but I really look forward to the Hall of Fame season because this kind of debate comes up, you get to think about the stats, and everyone starts talking about it."

Looking back

There is no doubt that the Hall of Fame has been successful at not just making people aware of the game's history but integrating the past, present, and future of the game. When [Worlds comes to New York](#) this winter, the Jacob Javitz Convention Center will play host to Hall of Famers Jon Finkel, Kai Budde, Rob Dougherty, Darwin Kastle, and Raphaël Lévy alongside current greats like Kenji Tsumura, Gabriel Nassif, Gadiel Szleifer, Mark Herberholz, Tomoharu Saito, Jelger Wiegersma and countless other stars of the game.

I have a hard time imagining any **Magic** fan within a reasonable distance of the East Coast not showing up to see so many of the game's great players in one place for the World Championships and the Class of 2007 induction ceremony.

"Whenever Kai shows up there is just a buzz in the room," said Scott. "Just like when Jon shows up. We gave Kai a special invite to Worlds last year and as soon as he showed up people were following him around every round.

"We wouldn't see Jon playing right now if not for the Hall of Fame," Scott continued. "I am sure that everyone has heard the story by now. We decided to send all the Hall of Fame inductees some current Standard product if they wanted to practice for Worlds. It showed up on his door and Jon immediately said, 'Let's draft!' and has been playing ever since."

"One of the things that really leaps out to me is the Hall of Fame cards," said **Magic** Creative Manager Jake Theis when asked about his thoughts on the Hall of Fame during U.S. Nationals, where Alan Comer was gunslinging. "Here at **Magic** Weekend I have seen people just mob Alan Comer, and a few years ago people weren't mobbing Alan Comer. I think the Hall of Fame has really shined a light on the game's stars and really familiarized them to people in all levels of **Magic**. It shows people that there are professional **Magic** players, making money playing a game, and having the time of their lives doing it."

None of this would be here without Richard Garfield, who was also on hand at **Magic** Weekend. I stepped over and asked him for his thoughts on the Hall and the game's creator summed it up perfectly.

"There is a tendency for games to forget about their legacy and it has been a real pleasure to see that there is this long term recognition that can happen," said Richard. "It means that names that I am familiar with which might have disappeared into history are being enshrined now for the future of the game."

The ballots will be tabulated after the August 31 deadline—something I imagine many voters will go right up against this year—and I will announce the results in my September 7 edition of *The Week That Was*.

But until then, there's time for one more month of debate.