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# The Class of 2007

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The Week That Was  
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

When the Hall of Fame was first announced during the 2005 Pro Tour season, a list was released that showed what years eligible players would show up on a ballot. Players do not become eligible for the Hall of Fame until 10 years after they first played on a Pro Tour, and each season was peppered with the game's greatest players.

While most seasons were peppery, the potential inductees for the Year Three class were the ingredients in a bowl of three-alarm chili with a liberal dousing of hot sauce and a scotch bonnet pepper on top. Kai Budde was a mortal lock for induction with as many Pro Tour wins as the next three players on the list, but after him there were six new candidates for the remaining four spots on the stage at this year's World Championships (and that is without taking into consideration a strong field of candidates from the previous two classes).



Ballots were distributed to the Selection Committee and the Players Committee with the list of eligible players and given a deadline of August 31 to submit their five candidates. Since that time the votes have been tabulated, the inductees have been notified, and itineraries have been arranged to have the following five players in New York for the 2007 **Magic World Championships**.

With all the ballots counted, the gap between the fifth spot on the stage at Worlds and the sixth-place bridesmaid (and a surefire entrance in the Class of 2008) came down to a single Selection Committee vote. But with a class this loaded, would you want it any other way?

Without further ado, the 2007 **Magic Pro Tour Hall of Fame Class**:

## Kai Budde

One of the most common posts in any thread about the Hall of Fame has gone something along the lines of: "OMG! How can you have a Pro Tour Hall of Fame without Kai Budde?"

It is pretty hard to imagine a **Magic Pro Tour** of Hall of Fame and not immediately think of Kai Budde, and even harder still to imagine that he accomplished everything in his career despite not playing on the Pro Tour until Mainz in 1998—making him ineligible until this class.

While the German Juggernaut has the second-most Top 8 appearances of all time, he emerged from those Top 8s as the winner in seven of nine tries. Those seven wins are not just more wins that anyone else in the history of the game; you have to add up the wins of the next three players on the Pro Tour winners list to equal the number of Kai's wins. His string of wins was so preposterous that he literally made Eric Taylor eat his hat. (Eric made a public wager that Kai could not possibly win Pro Tour–New Orleans. One timely **Morphling** later and Eric was reaching for the ketchup.)

Not surprisingly Kai won the Player of the Year title four times (three of those being in consecutive years). He is also the Lifetime Pro Points leader with a gap of more than 90 points between him Jon Finkel, who is No. 2 on the list. Along the way he also racked up seven Grand Prix wins. Among his 14 GP Top 8s, he never finished worse than third. Not enough? How about three quarterfinal Masters appearances with one win?

The numbers are simply staggering, and to think it all began with a trip to a Pro Tour Qualifier for the second Pro Tour in New York.

"I won a PT Qualifier in Hamburg," recalled Kai, who eventually would move to that part of Germany. "I still remember a guy, who was the self-proclaimed best Type 2 player in Germany back then, passing me a **Kor Chant** while he took a 2/2 creature for 3 with a **Disrupting Scepter** ability. He was playing 6/6/6 mana with six of those being **Plains**. That **Kor Chant** won me the semifinals."

Kai had the option of playing in either the Masters or Juniors division of that event, but based on comparing himself with some of the local players in Cologne, he did not feel confident that he was ready to slug it out with the older players.

Day One Wrap-up



MAGIC ONLINE



MESSAGE BOARDS



RULES




### BALLOT RESULTS

Listed below are the top 20 vote-getters in the Year Three Hall of Fame balloting. For complete results, [click here](#).

Finish	Name	Total
1	Kai Budde	90.42%
2	Zvi Mowshowitz	62.28%
3	Tsuyoshi Fujita	49.74%
4	Nicolai Herzog	41.50%
5	Randy Buehler	35.58%
6	Ben Rubin	35.21%
7	Michael Turian	31.87%
8	Justin Gary	10.73%
9	Chris Pikula	9.14%
10	Steven O'Mahoney-Schwartz	8.55%
11	Scott Johns	8.38%
12	David Price	8.15%
13	Itaru Ishida	7.28%
14	Tomi Walamies	7.14%
15	Brian Hacker	6.65%
16	Bram Snepvangers	5.97%
17	Mark Justice	5.66%
18	Alex Shvartsman	5.48%
19	Mattias Jorstedt	5.28%
20	Michael Long	5.25%

"I did not exactly have high expectations going into the event. Back then I was not nearly the best player in Cologne. Frank Adler had won the Mirage 'prerelease' PT a while back and there were several others that were just better. (That Pro Tour) was the final stop of the PT that had both a Masters and Juniors division and they called this the Junior World Championship. Figuring that I was not going to do very well in the main event, I just used my qualification to play in the Juniors tournament. I 4-0'd my first draft but then dropped two straight in the next including being shot down by an **Aladdin's Ring**. If I won one of those two matches, I would have been Top 8 with a draw but after winning my last round to go 1-2 in that draft, I finished top 16, if I remember correctly."

That Top 16 was good enough to get Kai qualified for the next Pro Tour. While he played in the Junior division,  Kai later realized that he was playing against some Master-level talent.

"A few years later the DCI added their match by match database and I saw that in that Juniors Division my opponents in the first draft included Jamie Parke and Brian Kibler, and one of my losses in the second was Eric Philipps. So the opponents there turned out to be able to play **Magic** pretty well a few years later."

Kai remembered barely squeaking into Day Two of his first 'grown-up' Pro Tour in Mainz, Germany. It all came down to a crucial third game in the final round:

"My opponent had me pretty much beaten. I was horribly mana flooded, he had two creatures and four lands in play and I had 11 lands and my last card in hand was a land. Now if he played one of the creatures in his hand, he would have 100 percent won. He decided to go with a **Mana Severance** though, removing all the lands in his deck from the game as he figured he could not possibly lose if he never drew a land again."

"My next draw was **Capsize**. He had two relevant permanents and his four lands would never again in the game allow him to play more than two threats at once and he had no tricks/burn in his blue/white deck to get out of the **Capsize** lock."

With such an impressive resume it would seem unfathomable for Kai to not be enshrined in the Hall of Fame on the first ballot, but when you are talking about a process that involves gamers there is always some concern. Because it was such a tough ballot there had been speculation that some voters would assume that everyone else was voting for Kai and therefore could use their five votes on other players.

"To be honest, when I read that they are going to introduce a Pro Tour Hall of Fame, I liked my chances to eventually make it. After the voting started I was slightly worried that either people did not vote me as I would get in anyway or that I just stopped too long ago to get enough votes," admitted Kai. "But after reading a few of the voting articles, I felt pretty safe."

What does getting into the Hall of Fame mean for Kai?

"First of all it means I am going to play some tournaments again, which I am looking forward to," replied the inveterate gamer. "Playing in big events has always been the most fun to me, but I was definitely not going through the PTQ circuit again or try to keep up Level 3 if I should make it there at some point. For a long time I devoted most of my time to **Magic** and to that extent, I don't want to and won't be able to do that again. Being voted into the Hall of Fame shows me that the people who did those votes recognize the time and effort I put into playing **Magic** and believe I should be a future part of the Pro Tour as well, which makes me feel even better about looking back at my time on the Pro Tour."

This means we can look forward to seeing Kai play in New York this December. Could we be looking forward to a tenth Top 8 as well?

"I am definitely going to play in Worlds. I already made sure I would get enough days off work, in case I got into the Hall of Fame," Kai confirmed. "I don't think I am going to miss many Pro Tours that are within a 6-8 hour flight's reach. I am not a big fan of flying to Japan and back just for a few days over there. Chances are I will not attend many events in Asia. Other than that I plan to attend most Pro Tours/Worlds if my work schedule allows and the format seems fun. For example I have high doubts I will ever attend a 2HG event, but I won't miss European or East Coast Limited tournaments. And making a Top 8... sure, why not? I still think I know how to play those cards. Also if you play in enough PTs, odds are you get lucky sooner or later. I've been fortunate enough in the past when I needed it, why not again in the future?"

"As I already suggested, I appreciate getting the votes to make it a lot," said Kai when asked if there was anyone in particular he wished to thank. "Other than that I think the people that helped me get there during my time on the PT know who they are. The list is too long and includes family, friends and even teachers who allowed me to take time off school to travel and play in events, so I am not going to list everyone here. Thanks, guys."

### THE POWER OF KAI

#### Pro Tour:

Boston 03: 3rd (Teams)  
 Boston 02: 1st (Teams)  
 Chicago 03: 1st (Rochester Draft)  
 New York 01: 1st (Teams)  
 New Orleans 01: 1st (Extended)  
 Nice: 5th (Booster Draft)  
 Chicago 00-01: 1st (Standard)  
 Barcelona 00-01: 1st (Booster Draft)  
 Worlds 99: 1st

Player of the Year in 1998-99, 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03


#### Grand Prix:

Brussels 03-04: 2nd (Block Constructed)  
 Madrid 03-04: 1st (Booster Draft)  
 Goteborg 03-04: 4th (Rochester Draft)  
 Copenhagen 02-03: 3rd (Rochester Draft)  
 Naples 01-02: 3rd (Booster Draft)  
 Antwerp 01-02: 1st (Booster Draft)  
 Lisbon 01-02: 1st (Extended)  
 Biarritz 01-02: 2nd (Rochester Draft)  
 London 01-02: 1st (Block Constructed)  
 Florence 00-01: 3rd (Extended)  
 Birmingham 98-99: 2nd (Standard)  
 Amsterdam 98-99: 1st (Nov 96 Type II)  
 Barcelona 98-99: 1st (Booster Draft)  
 Vienna 98-99: 1st

#### Masters:

Venice 03: Top 8 (Teams)  
 Nice 02: Top 4 (Booster Draft)  
 Osaka 02: Winner (Teams)

## Kai Budde's Domain

1st Place, Grand Prix—London 2001, Invasion Block Constructed 

### Main Deck 60 cards

7 Forest  
5 Island

4 Allied Strategies  
4 Chromatic Sphere

### Sideboard

3 Addle  
1 Destructive Flow

2 Llanowar Wastes	4 Collective Restraint	1 Legacy Weapon
2 Mountain	2 Destructive Flow	1 Overgrown Estate
1 Plains	4 Evasive Action	3 Penumbra Bobcat
3 Swamp	1 Goblin Trenches	2 Pernicious Deed
1 Yavimaya Coast	4 Harrow	3 Spiritmonger
	4 Lay of the Land	1 Void
21 lands	1 Legacy Weapon	
	1 Ordered Migration	15 sideboard cards
	1 Overgrown Estate	
0 creatures	2 Pernicious Deed	
	2 Void	
	4 Worldly Counsel	
	1 Yawgmoth's Agenda	
	39 other spells	

## Zvi Mowshowitz

Like the leader of this year's class, Zvi Mowshowitz began his **Magic** career in the Junior division of the Pro Tour when he took part in Pro Tour–Dallas. He made the Finals of the next Junior Pro Tour in Los Angeles but it was not until he took part in Pro Tour–Los Angeles the following season (finishing 12th) that the clock started ticking on his Hall of Fame eligibility. Not including that Finals appearance in the Junior division, Zvi would eventually rack up four Pro Tour Top 8 finishes including a win at Pro Tour–Tokyo in 2000. He was a member of the 1999 U.S. National team and also made the Top 8 of four Grand Prix events, with two victories.

When he finally retired from playing Zvi was in the Top 20 in both lifetime money winnings and Pro Points. Despite his amazing career as a player, Zvi is perhaps better known as a deck designer and **Magic** columnist. He is easily the most prolific writer in the history of the game and has written for a variety of **Magic** sites starting with the **Magic Dojo** and continuing on through **Magicthegathering.com**.

Even when Zvi looked back at the Pro Tour experience that launched his Pro career, his first response involved contextualizing it with the written word.

"I remember enough about that event to write a tournament report," laughed Zvi. "It was on the Queen Mary, where I'd qualified earlier that year with a second in the Junior Division before it was disbanded. I had no expectations for myself. I was up against the great names of the game, in over my head and beyond nervous, starting with Mark Le Pine and ending with a match against Darwin Kastle. The entire time it felt surreal, but there was nothing to do but go ahead and play my best game so that's what I did.

"My deck helped give me confidence too," he continued his recollection of the *Tempest* Block Constructed format. Block Constructed formats would become something of a specialty of his over the years and doing well at that first block event was no doubt formative. "I had built it on my own and never seen it around Neutral Ground only to find that a version of it was being played by a third of the field. I had to be doing something right, so while I didn't expect to win I also didn't feel as surprised as I expected to when I did well and finished 12th."

Zvi's breakthrough tournament came at Pro Tour–New York during the 1998-99 season. The format was *Urza's Block* Constructed and Zvi's Zero Effect deck carried him into the Top 4 of that event and cemented his reputation as a mad scientist of the game. Of course that reputation was backed up by Zvi's unshorn face and unkempt mop of hair. As **Magic** was moving toward television, Zvi was given a makeover prior to Sunday's action.

"My best memory on the Pro Tour has to be the makeover from PT–New York where Wizards decided to prepare me for my trip to the big stage with a new wardrobe and the infamous shaving incident involving three gorgeous Russian lady barbers," Zvi reminisced. "Nothing would ever be the same again."

While the makeover from Pro Tour New York may have opened up Zvi's eyes to the amount of attention being paid to the game he never imagined that years later, once again at a Pro Tour in New York, he would be stepping onto that big stage to be enshrined in the game's Hall of Fame.

"When you're competing, you try to win every event, make your name and be the best but it never occurred to me that **Magic** would have a Hall of Fame," explained Zvi. "In my first years on tour, the thought of me being in it, even if one existed, wasn't something I could have comprehended either. Once I hit my stride there was a palpable sense among many players that we were playing for our place in **Magic** history as we raced along the lifetime winnings chart. To me the great accomplishment is that we've made it to where we can have a Hall of Fame. It brings us one step closer to the goal of Garfield, of games and other mental sports standing on the same platform as baseball, football or soccer."

"I was optimistic, but I never assumed I would make it," said Zvi when he was asked about his expectations of making the Hall of Fame on such a star-studded ballot. "At least two people who deserved to make it into the Hall were going to be excluded, and aside from Kai no one was assured of entry. When I got the call telling me I'd gotten in, I felt a combination of joy and relief that I'd made it in. Before it had a chance to sink in, I was talking about the logistics of the event and talking about what to do with a plane ticket. When something that big happens, it doesn't hit you all at once."

### THE POWER OF ZVI

#### Pro Tour:

New York 2001: 3rd (Teams)  
 Chicago 00-01: 7th (Standard)  
 Tokyo 00-01: 1st (*Invasion* Block Constructed)  
 New York 98-99: 3rd (*Urza's* Block Constructed)  
 Los Angeles 1997 (Junior): 2nd (Rochester Draft)

#### Grand Prix:

Atlanta 03-04: 5th (Standard)  
 Pittsburgh 02-03: 1st (Teams)  
 Boston 02-03: 7th (Booster Draft)  
 New Orleans 02-03: 1st (Extended)  
 New Jersey 01-02: 2nd (Teams)  
 Manchester 00-01: 8th (Rochester)  
 D.C. 98-99: 4th (Rochester)  
 Boston 98-99: 4th (*Rath* Block Constructed)

Top 4 US Nationals 1999


"The Hall of Fame has a twin existence," he continued. "On one pillar it means that I've been recognized as one of the all time greats of the **Magic** Pro Tour, and that's an amazing honor. At the same time it also means I'll always be qualified, and that's an amazing opportunity. A lot of Pros forget how hard it is when you have to fight your way back to every event, but I tried to remember how much harder it is for those on the outside looking in."

Like Kai, Zvi was looking forward to not just the induction but the opportunity to participate in the tournament. "I will be attending Worlds, and I will play. I would never miss a once in a lifetime opportunity like this, nor would I consider doing that to the game. As for playing, it's been a long time and I'm ready for my comeback.

"I'll see how Worlds goes and decide where to go from there. If Pro Tours are something I still enjoy, you can expect to see me at events in the United States, although my job will likely keep me away from Europe and Asia. And if I'm in it, I'm in it to win it—I plan on playing the Sunday after the ceremony! However, I recognize that I'm not going to be able to put in the kinds of hours and dedication that today's top players can, and the competition is far tougher than it was during my career. It's going to be tough."


Zvi started his list of thank-yous at the top of the **Magic** ladder.

"I'd like to thank Richard Garfield for creating the game, Skaff Elias for creating the Tour and Randy Buehler for creating the Hall," declared Zvi when given an opportunity to thank anyone. "Without them there would be no vote and no one would be standing on that platform. From my end, I have to thank Scott Johns and Justin Gary. Working with those and other great teammates is what allowed me to enjoy such great success, and they're the reason I had such a great career."

Zvi Mowshowitz's Turboland		
1st Place, Grand Prix–New Orleans 2003, Extended		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
5 Forest	4 Accumulated Knowledge	1 Capsize
14 Island	1 Capsize	3 Deep Analysis
1 Treetop Village	4 Counterspell	1 Dust Bowl
4 Yavimaya Coast	4 Exploration	1 Gainsay
24 lands	2 Gush	1 Intuition
	4 Horn of Greed	1 Misdirection
	2 Intuition	1 Naturalize
1 Battlefield Scrounger	2 Krosan Reclamation	2 Powder Keg
1 creatures	3 Moment's Peace	3 Ravenous Baloth
	4 Oath of Druids	1 Thwart
	2 Scroll Rack	
	3 Time Warp	15 sideboard cards
	35 other spells	

## Tsuyoshi Fujita

When Tsuyoshi Fujita squared off with Zvi Mowshowitz in the finals of Pro Tour–Tokyo, it was a momentous occasion. It may seem shocking to imagine a time when Japan was not one of the dominating forces on the competitive **Magic** scene, but before Tsuyoshi's Top 8 turn no Japanese player had ever played beyond Saturday at the Pro Tour level.

"It doesn't feel real. It's much more like some kind of dream," was Tsuyoshi's reaction at the time of crossing the Top 8 threshold. Since that appearance he has gone on to make the Top 8 of three Pro Tours in his career (including another finals finish), reached the Top 8 of a dozen Grand Prix tournaments, and been the Japanese National Champion in 2004. 

Tsuyoshi is 10th on the all-time money list and 11th on lifetime Pro Points, tops among all Japanese players. Tsuyoshi became one of the first Japanese players to travel outside of his region for Grand Prix competition and is widely recognized as one of the game's great deckbuilders. His **Sneak Attack** deck for Grand Prix–Seattle was one of the most unexpected decks that season and his refined Goblin Bidding deck that won Grand Prix–Bangkok became an industry standard.

When asked which of his **Magic** accomplishments stands out most, Fujita was quick to show his trademark humor: "Spreading the fame of 'Go Anan' and his decks throughout the world!"

"All kidding aside, I am really happy when I think about how many people use my decks and how well they perform," he said. "Including Kuroda's win at Kobe, ever since Tokyo all of my Block Constructed decks have made Top 32 at a Pro Tour. Thinking about it objectively, if I may say so myself, that's pretty amazing."

Fujita's Pro Tour career began at the 1999 World Championships when he finished 99th—the highest placing by any Japanese player in the tournament. He went on to post a Top 64 and Top 32 during the following season before blazing a Top 8 trail that would become well-worn by the likes of Masashi Oiso, Kenji Tsumura, Tomoharu Saito, Shuhei Nakamura, and Masashiro Kuroda.

Fujita says that a certain Hall of Famer played a big role in his development as a **Magic** player.

### THE POWER OF TSUYOSHI

**Pro Tour:**  
 London 2005: 2nd (Booster draft)  
 Los Angeles 2005: 5th (Extended)  
 Tokyo 2001: 2nd (Invasion Block Constructed)

**Grand Prix:**  
 Seattle 2005: 7th (Extended)  
 Kuala Lumpur 03-04: 4th (Standard)  
 Bangkok 02-03: 1st (Standard)

"Back when Jon Finkel was in his prime, all the good American players were strong. I mean, really strong. I fell in love with them. Around the time Finkel won Worlds in Belgium, I was seriously thinking about enrolling in a study-abroad program so I could go to the U.S. and study **Magic** with him and the other pros."

There is little doubt that Fujita will be sitting down for the first round of action at this year's event. His monoblue Pickles build from Pro Tour–Yokohama nearly got Masahiko Morita his first Top 8 and has become one of the dominating archetypes of this Block Constructed season. He is the only player from this year's class who already had Level 3 status and he will also be playing in Valencia, where he will no doubt have an exciting deck in store.

"I have always been a competitive person," Fujita admits. "I love playing hardcore with other people. So, to me, **Magic** is the ultimate hobby.

"It may even be the most important thing in my life."

Hiroshima 02-03: 7th (Extended)  
 Utsunomiya 02-03: 3rd (Rochester draft)  
 Nagoya 01-02: 4th (teams)  
 Fukuoka 01-02: 6th (Booster draft)  
 Hong Kong 01-02: 3rd (Rochester draft)  
 Hiroshima 00-01: 6th (Booster Draft)  
 Kyoto 00-01: 1st (Extended)  
 Taipei 99-00: 2nd (Extended)  
 Kyoto 98-99: 4th

Masters San Diego 2002: Top 8 (Standard)

Japan National Championship 2004: 1st

### Tsuyoshi Fujita's The Rats

2nd Place, Pro Tour–Tokyo 2001, Invasion Block Constructed

Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
11 Island 4 Salt Marsh 9 Swamp <hr/> 24 lands  2 Phyrexian Scuta 4 Ravenous Rats 2 Urborg Shambler <hr/> 8 creatures	2 Spite // Malice 4 Addle 4 Exclude 4 Fact or Fiction 3 Prohibit 3 Recoil 2 Repulse 4 Undermine 2 Yawgmoth's Agenda <hr/> 28 other spells	4 Gainsay 4 Nightscape Familiar 2 Phyrexian Scuta 2 Spinal Embrace 2 Urborg Shambler 1 Yawgmoth's Agenda <hr/> 15 sideboard cards

## Nicolai Herzog

Nicolai Herzog had one of the most exciting Pro Tour seasons in the history of the game when he won back-to-back Limited Pro Tours in 2004. Despite his historic achievement, Nicolai missed out on the Player of the Year title to Gabriel Nassif, and subsequently semi-retired from the game after Worlds. That was fitting since Worlds was where his career began in 1998...and where it will resume in 2007.

Nicolai posted a Top 64 finish at his first event. A year later he returned to the World Championships and achieved the first of his four Top 8 appearances that would culminate in those back-to-back wins in 2004. Grand Prix competition was never a big part of Nico's game and the Norwegian player only had two Top 8 appearances in those tournaments. Norwegian Nationals were a different story, with Herzog representing his country at Nationals five different times—including the 2006 season. Herzog is also a two-time winner of the European Championships.

When you do the books for his career, Herzog comes out sixth all-time on the money-winner's list and in the Top 20 for lifetime Pro Points. The first entry in that ledger comes from that long-ago World Championships.

"I remember seeing all these players I'd been reading about in the Sideboard and Duelist and whatnot, and not being as intimidated as I thought I would be," said Herzog, who qualified for that event as a member of his National team, when asked about his memories of that first step in a Hall of Fame career. "I remember narrowly losing to Mike Long in an extremely frustrating Game 3. And I remember the most awkwardly random team sealed format ever; 'Walls 'n Bombs'."

Like the other members of this year's class, Nicolai never imagined that there would be a Hall of Fame when he began playing. While he waited for the results of this year's class he was not sure if people would remember him enough to vote him in on this very tough ballot. Hall of Fame aside, Nicolai had played in every World Championships since that first tournament and had been nervous about snapping that streak.

"I thought it would be a coin flip, pretty much. I haven't written many articles and haven't been very visible the last three years," he explained. "So I had to get in by achievements and good looks alone. Getting that phone call was both amazing and a huge relief. I will both attend and play. Was pretty sad after my Nats when I realized I might just miss out on Worlds for the first time since '98.

"Being recognized for my accomplishments in this way means a lot to me," Nico continued. "Being enshrined in the class is a great honor indeed. But just as important is the fact that I may yet again travel the world, cast spells and hang out with old friends that I've seen way too little of these last three years!"

### THE POWER OF NICOLAI

**Pro Tour:**  
 Amsterdam 2004: 1st (Rochester Draft)  
 San Diego 2004: 1st (Booster Draft)  
 Chicago 2003: 2nd (Rochester Draft)  
 World Championships 1999: 8th


**Grand Prix:**  
 Bochum 03-04: 3rd (Teams)  
 Vienna 01-02: 3rd (Rochester Draft)

**Championships:**  
 European Championships 1999: 1st  
 European Championships 2003: 1st

Playing is very important for Herzog, who has a new appreciation for the game since walking away in 2004. "I'll be showing up at many—maybe all—PTs again. I've been missing the pro circuit a LOT since quitting in 2004. I can't help but speculate if I shouldn't have just kept attending the PTs (during) 04/05 and hoped the joy of playing would come back to me. I've lost out on so very much these last three years. But playing is fun again, the last few cycles have been pretty awesome, and I have a fair amount of spare time. So you might just see me late night drafting in the far corners of the world again."

Norway National Championship 1999: 1st  
Norway National Championship 2001: 1st


"Oh and Sundays?" he added, "Absolutely. Next Limited PT. Wait and see! To everyone that voted for me! Thanks mates!"

Nicolai Herzog's Stompy		
1st Place, 1999 European Championships, Standard		
Main Deck	Sideboard	
60 cards		
3 Treetop Village	4 Rancor	1 Uktabi Orangutan
4 Gaea's Cradle	4 Giant Growth	2 Thran Foundry
14 Forest	4 Cursed Scroll	2 Choke
21 lands	12 other spells	2 Wild Dogs
4 Pouncing Jaguar		2 Repopulate
2 Uktabi Orangutan		2 Spike Weaver
2 Wild Dogs		4 Wasteland
4 River Boa		15 sideboard cards
4 Albino Troll		
4 Llanowar Elves		
4 Elvish Lyrist		
3 Masticore		
27 creatures		

## Randy Buehler

Randy Buehler needs little introduction to anyone who reads [Magicthegathering.com](http://Magicthegathering.com), watches the video coverage from the Pro Tour, or has looked up the design credits on any number of **Magic** sets over the past half dozen years. Allow me to introduce you to Randy Buehler, the **Magic** player.

Randy debuted on the **Magic** scene with a stunning win at Pro Tour—Chicago fresh from the PTQ ranks. He went on to win the Rookie of the Year that season and would only play in 11 more Pro Tours before hanging up the deckbox to take a job at Wizards of the Coast.

While he did not reach the Top 8 again in the span of time, he did Top 16 a stunning four more times (with a Top 17 thrown in for good measure). Randy only finished outside of the Top 64 twice out of those dozen tournaments and never worse than 124th. He traveled all over the world in pursuit of Grand Prix success and made the Top 8 seven times, with one win. Extended appeared to be his exclusive territory during those two years as he won the Pro Tour in addition to winning the Extended Championships. 

Since leaving the player ranks, Randy has been the head of **Magic** R&D, the voice of the Pro Tour, a regular columnist, and a strong advocate for the Pro Tour at Wizards, where he championed such causes as the Pro Players Club and the Hall of Fame itself. Whether or not Randy would get inducted into the Hall of Fame despite his short career was one of the hot button topics for this year's class. Nobody was less certain of the outcome than Randy himself.

"I've been thinking about this for years," said Randy just a day after hearing the news. "At first I thought I would probably get in, but then guys like Ben and Tsuyoshi kept putting up more and new results so I had myself down to a coin-flip. Last week I would probably have bet against me (but that may have just been a psychological defense against the possibility). This is such a huge big deal it felt awesome when I first heard the news and it still feels awesome. It really validates the way I've chosen to spend my life—**Magic** is a large part of who I am and this is an honor I will remember for the rest of my life."

Randy became the second Wizards employee to be voted into the Hall, but the first who will be still employed at the time of his induction. Alan Comer took another job and briefly returned to playing when he was voted into the inaugural class before returning to Wizards. Randy was hoping for some other solution.

"I actually haven't missed a Pro Tour since 1997. My PT attendance streak is ten years long now and even better than [Hall of Famer Raphael] Levy's," said Randy who would love to do more than host the Tournament Center video segments after this year's induction ceremony. "I would love to play in Worlds. Most of the time I really love my job, but I definitely still miss the thrill of competition. I miss that adrenaline rush—step in the arena—prove that you can do it again—rush. I've never really found a way to replace ever since I left for the job here at Wizards I've been telling people that my goal is to do my job well enough that the Pro Tour will still be there for me when I retire. My new mission is to try to talk the folks that run the Pro Tour into a one-event exception to the rules ... employees can play in Pro Tours if and only if they are being inducted into the Hall of Fame that weekend. No one would complain about this, right?"

"I'm totally serious about my desire to go back to the tour if I ever leave WotC and I'm totally serious about playing in Worlds if they'll let me," he continued. "My game is rusty right now, but I do believe I'm capable of getting back into shape. Meanwhile, I have continued to hold my own on the side-draft circuit late at night during Pro Tours."

Randy qualified for his Pro Tour-winning turn in Extended by winning a PTQ. "I won a *Mirage* Block Constructed PTQ with a *Sands of Time / Equipoise* lock deck that I had tuned significantly after seeing it for the first time from the losing end of a PTQ match earlier in the season at Origins."

Obviously Randy's best memory of that Pro Tour was winning right out of the gate but as he recalled having his mettle tested against another Hall of Famer right away. "My first memory of it is actually the Round 1 pairings. I saw that I was matched up against Darwin Kastle and I was like 'All right, here we go ...' Two blow-outs later and I was thinking, 'My Necro deck just seems better than his ... maybe I can compete at this level.'"

His last round of the weekend also provided some happy memories. Randy replayed the match this way: "David Mills stammering 'Th-th-that works?' when I dropped a *Lake of the Dead* to *Drain Life* him for four off of just two swamps when he thought he had me *Dwarven Miner* locked. I was truly shocked to win the Pro Tour on that play—mentally I was already thinking about how to sideboard for Game 5 and I would have Lake-Drained the miner five turns earlier if I knew he didn't have a counterspell. I have a million other good ones. No. 2 is probably going out for breakfast after drafting all night, which is about a 17-way tie."

The Hall of Fame held meaning for Randy as both a player and as an employee of Wizards of the Coast, and good luck un-entwining the two of them: "It's an honor I will truly cherish for the rest of my life. I'll always have that ring and it will always remind me that for a while I was one of the best in the world at something."

"I grew up as a big baseball fan and I always particularly enjoyed the statistical aspect of the game and comparing players across generations so the idea of a Hall of Fame is something I've always enjoyed thinking about. By Year Three or Four of the Pro Tour, it was already the kind of thing guys would speculate about over beers or boosters. I guess it had drifted a little bit out of my consciousness until it came up in a meeting at work about three years ago. As soon as someone said the words '10-year anniversary of the Pro Tour' and 'Hall of Fame' in the same paragraph, it felt instantly right. Then it took about 3.4 seconds for me to wonder how this might affect me."

"Part of me feels bad about being potentially biased by my own experiences with the game, but most of me realizes that those biases are exactly why I was hired! Wizards has staffed up the company with its own customers precisely so that we'll be able to channel what our players will think or feel about various games or promotions ... makes it quite a cool company to work for."

Looking back on his careers as both a player and an employee of Wizards, I wondered if there was anyone Randy wanted to thank at this point. "Everyone. The one person I want to single out for thanks is my wife Del. She's seen a lot of my crazy/obsessive hobbies come and go during our 16-year relationship and she's been remarkably patient and supportive. This one elevated itself far above the others and fundamentally changed both of our lives. I'm really glad we walked this path together."

### THE POWER OF RANDY

**Pro Tour:**  
Chicago 1997: 1st (Extended)

Rookie of the Year in 1997-98

**Grand Prix:**  
Kansas City 98-99: 7th (Extended)  
Vienna 98-99: 5th (Extended)  
Boston 98-99: 2nd (Rath Block Constructed)  
Lisbon 98-99: 3rd (Rath Block Constructed)  
Antwerp 98-99: 5th (Booster Draft)  
Indianapolis 97-98: 5th (Booster Draft)  
Atlanta 97-98: 1st (Rochester)

## Randy Buehler's Forbidian

7th Place, Grand Prix—Kansas City 1999, Extended

### Main Deck 60 cards

14 <i>Island</i>	4 <i>Counterspell</i>
4 <i>Thawing Glaciers</i>	4 <i>Force of Will</i>
4 <i>Wasteland</i>	3 <i>Forbid</i>
4 <i>Mishra's Factory</i>	3 <i>Nevinyrral's Disk</i>
26 lands	4 <i>Force Spike</i>
	4 <i>Brainstorm</i>
4 <i>Ophidian</i>	4 <i>Impulse</i>
2 <i>Morphling</i>	2 <i>Arcane Laboratory</i>
6 creatures	28 other spells

### Sideboard

2 <i>Arcane Laboratory</i>
2 <i>Null Rod</i>
1 <i>Nevinyrral's Disk</i>
2 <i>Whispers of the Muse</i>
3 <i>Quicksand</i>
4 <i>Hydroblast</i>
1 <i>Morphling</i>

15 sideboard cards

Congratulations to the 2007 Class of the Pro Tour Hall of Fame. In lieu of a Firestarter this week, feel free to use the forums to pass on congratulations to Kai Budde, Zvi Mowshowitz, Tsuyoshi Fujita, Nicolai Herzog, and Randy Buehler.

*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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