

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

# Fourth Quarter Forecast

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, September 28, 2007



The third quarter of the 2007 season was studded with National Championships, and finishes with an always-exciting [Prerelease](#) weekend. October kicks off the fourth quarter with a non-stop parade of events that includes a [Pro Tour](#), six [Grand Prix](#), [World Championships](#), [States / Champs](#), and a [Pro Tour Qualifier](#) season that feeds into Kuala Lumpur. Let's peek ahead at the calendar and preview the stretch run of the 2007 season.

The quarter kicks off with an off-week in between the [Prerelease](#) and [Release Events](#) for *Lorwyn*. There is of course the new [Friday Night Magic](#) foil promo card to get your month started in a spiffy fashion. This month's FNM foil is [Cabal Coffers](#).



That weekend is also the date of the Top8Magic Mockvitational—a New York tournament patterned after the **Magic** Invitational—simply because starting the following weekend there is not a moment to breathe on the tournament schedule.

Week two is a triple threat weekend. First up are the *Lorwyn* [Release Events](#) at stores all over the world. This is the weekend that the product goes on sale, and stores will be celebrating this with Sealed Deck, Booster Draft, and Two-Headed Giant Sealed Deck. You can find out more about your local Release Event by going [here](#).

You certainly won't have to worry about seeing your local Pros during the Release Event, unless it happens to be taking place at the [Ciudad De Las Artes Y Las Ciencias](#) in Valencia, Spain. The majority of the Pro Points in the free world will be congregated there for the penultimate Pro Tour of the 2007 season. The format is Extended minus *Lorwyn*, which does not become legal until October 20th in Constructed formats.

Nobody knows quite what to expect from the format with early frontrunners for decks to beat including Affinity, Goblins, Gaea's Might Get There, TEPS, and—the format's elephant sitting in the middle of the convention center—Dredge. *Ichoriid* has been a format staple since the dredge mechanic was introduced more than a year ago, and the deck has always been fast. With the introduction of the [Narcomoeba / Bridge from Below](#) engine the deck has gone into overdrive and is capable of winning on turn two if unmolested.

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That will be one of the central stories coming out of Spain that weekend. If players overload on hate for the Dredge-based decks then that archetype will have a hard time navigating the Swiss rounds. If players make the assumption that everyone else is going to do this then suddenly the deck becomes less attractive. If players reach a collective decision not to play the deck then suddenly dedicating more than half your sideboard slots for the deck becomes similarly unattractive, and a window opens up for someone to win a Pro Tour with the bulk of their deck in their graveyard on turn two of the Finals.

It is a very similar dynamic to what happened in [Columbus, Ohio](#) a couple of years ago when Pierre Canali was able to take advantage of people's lowered artifact defenses with his Affinity build. While many players maintained some level of sideboard measures for the Affinity deck it was almost a token gesture, with not even a full set of **Energy Flux** in many cases, and Pierre was able to fight through those answers all weekend long. How many players will decide to play this powerful but disputable deck? Will Dredge players be fighting through three to four pieces of sideboard hate? Will they be fighting through ten? I can't wait to find out and will be keeping you up to date on the metagame from the Tournament Center all weekend long.



Another story that will be exciting to follow is how well the so-called Joes fare against the Pros. As a perk of their [Invitational berths](#), both Stephen Menendian and Evan Erwin were invited to compete in Valencia. Stephen has rarely—if ever—competed outside of the Vintage arena, and Evan finds himself suddenly vaulted from the PTQ ranks to the Pro Tour battlefield.

The first [PTQ season](#) for 2008 also gets underway that weekend, although you will be hard pressed to find one competing with the Release weekend—in North America there are no events until the 20th. There will be PTQs over the weekend in Spain and I will be sure to check in on those events to get a handle on building a *Lorwyn* Sealed Deck.

The [Player of the Year](#) race will be very much on everyone's mind in Valencia, but if the last few years have shown us anything it is that the slew of Grand Prix events in the following weeks will have as much impact and could very well be the difference between first and second place. This lends some extra drama to Kenji Tsumura's performance in Valencia, as he has chosen to forgo [Grand Prix–Brisbane](#) to take his spot at the Invitational hot on the heels of the Pro Tour.

PoY frontrunner Tomoharu Saito has grown weary of being the man behind the PoY—he was teammates with Kenji Tsumura two years ago and with Shouta Yasooka last year. This year he has chosen to pass up his APAC invitation (to compete at Spiel in the Invitational) for the chance to pad his two-point lead in the PoY race. With Tsumura, Wafo-Tapa, and Levy all competing in the Invitational, the Grand Prix is not just a chance for Saito to put some distance between his pursuers but for the likes of Shingou Kurihara, Paul Cheon, and Olivier Ruel to close some ground.

Expect to see all three players in attendance in Australia at the kickoff for a crazy stretch of Grand Prix tournaments that will extend through the middle of December. For the past month Portugal's Andre Coimbra's MSN nickname has been "André Valencia-&gt;Brisbane-&gt;Bangkok-&gt;Krakow-&gt;Kitakyuushuu-&gt;Daytona Beach-&gt;New York" in anticipation of this last leg in the PoY race.

"While registering this year for college, I chose to have most of my subjects in the second semester so that I only have one in the first semester in order to get the most of **Magic**," explained Andre as he geared up for three months of nearly non-stop **Magic**. "I guess that when people really want something they just make it work."

Andre has had great success in Grand Prix competition over the past two seasons and was rather surprised when he was not included in the pared-down ballots for Road Warrior this year—a factor in his decision to attend so many events this season, although he did not expect that he would be stamping his passport as thoroughly as he will by year's end, including brief stays in Thailand, Japan, Poland, and the U.S.

"The criterion for Road Warrior was about how many GPs people played, which is really a matter of time and money and not about skill or scores," explained Andre, who originally expected to play in only ten events in hoping of getting on next year's ballot. "I got some good scores and that changed the situation."



"I spent some time studying the math behind the Players Club system and wrote an [article](#) about it. After analyzing my current situation with those numbers I realized that it was worth it for me to attend all six of the remaining GPs and two Pro Tours in order to get enough points for Level 5. I expect some Top 32 or better finishes at the Grand Prix and a Top 16 at Worlds or Valencia. My goals are not about single tournaments, where the variances will leave most people with high goals disappointed most of the time, but about the Players Club level. I expect to finish the season with Level 5."

I know that I have a hard time staying fresh and alert with all the travel I do covering events, and I don't need to compete and don't have nearly as rigorous a schedule as any of the players chasing after the back-to-back-to-back GPs. What is Andre's secret to doing well under such strenuous conditions?

"I always try to not arrive in town on Friday but by Thursday or before, as I usually feel better when I have already two nights of sleep to adapt myself to the local time," shared Andre, who went on to add: "I don't care so much about my losses and just try to give my best in each game and each situation, while not thinking too much about how many wins I really need for a good score."

As for the Player of the Year race Andre predicted the winner would be "Tomoharu Saito and not only because he is in the lead; he was the only one in the race to sacrifice his Invitational slot to attend an extra GP and fight for the POY title."

While Andre and company are embroiled in highest levels of competition players will be competing locally in the annual Standard [Champs](#) and [States](#) tournaments on October 27th—just two weeks after the release of *Lorwyn*. Players will have to say goodbye to their *Ravnica* Block cards and sort through the new set to find suitable replacements for the Standard environment. It is always an exciting time in **Magic** as new decks are revealed for the first time. As always (almost) all the decks will be featured on the decklist page and if you make the Top 8 be sure to poke your Tournament Organizer to submit their lists so you can see your name and deck featured in the Tournament Center.

Starting in November there will be three straight weekends of Grand Prix competition, which will make it five weekends in a row, before players get one weekend off before Worlds. I am going to have some exciting news about the events leading up to and at Worlds next week and if you live in the Northeast region of the United States you will want to pay special attention to that installment for that reveal—stay tuned.

The highlight of the World Championships will no doubt be the [Hall of Fame](#) induction ceremony headlined by Kai Budde. You can reasonably expect to see a full two-thirds of the fifteen Hall of Famers playing in the event, as there have been reports of Jon Finkel, Gary Wise, and Bob Maher all planning on playing in addition to the ubiquitous Rob Dougherty, Darwin Kastle, and Raphael Levy from the first two classes.

The Player of the Year race will be settled at Worlds (contrary to what I had originally believed) despite one remaining event on the 2007 calendar, Grand Prix—Stuttgart. Just one week after the World Championships, you can now expect to see some world-weary players skipping this event to rest after a long 2007 season. Of course it will be a great chance for Tomoharu Saito to get a leg up on 2008, when we get to start the whole thing over from scratch.



## Firestarter: Champs Forecast

Of the preview cards that have been featured over the last three weeks here on [magicthegathering.com](#) (collected at the bottom of the [Lorwyn Product Page](#)), which do you think is most likely to be featured prominently in a Champs deck and why? Head to the forums and share your early predictions for the new Standard format.

*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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