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# Seven World-Class Days in New York

Brian David-Marshall  
The Week That Was  
Friday, November 30,  
2007



The whirlwind of **Magic**, good times, famous faces, history, and drama that is the [World Championships](#) will touch down in my hometown starting this weekend. It has been more than six years since the last time the Pro Tour visited New York City, and almost a dozen since the very first Pro Tour was held here in the city that never sleeps. I cannot even begin to express how excited I (and almost every New York area player I know) am to share this week of **Magic** with the rest of the world.

This column will walk you through the week that will be in **Magic** with key events, some of my favorite places to eat and drink, and—for those of you who are not fortunate enough to be making the trip—what stories you can look forward to in the Tournament Center.

## Saturday, December 1

### Oversized Magic in the Park Washington Square Park 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Even if you are not a New Yorker, you have probably seen Washington Square Park—one of over 1700 parks in the city—on TV or in a movie. The built-in chess tables of the park were the backdrop for most of the outdoor chess scenes in "Searching for Bobby Fischer" and just about every other scene in movie where people play chess in New York. As part of the promotional efforts for the big event, Wizards of the Coast is going to be setting up two outdoor oversized **Magic** games to kick off the week leading up to the World Championships.

If you have ever seen the oversized games of **Magic** played at U.S. Nationals, you should have an idea of what I am talking about. I am sure this first exhibition is going to be taking place before many players coming from out of town will arrive, but it is a great opportunity for locals to see **Magic** played in a pretty unexpected setting. Who knows, you might even get a chance to get in the game!



Washington Square Park will feature two oversized **Magic** games leading up to Worlds.

I will be there along with a handful of local players and some PR types from Wizards. I imagine we should not be hard to find what with the big cards and all. Rumor has it there will be some giveaways (while supplies last) as well.

### Hotdogging in New York Gray's Papaya

After the game in the park—and throughout the week—you might want to check out Gray's Papaya on Sixth Avenue and West 8th for the quintessential New York hotdog experience. One of the things I love most about living in the New York area is the availability of quality food at all price points. If you like hot dogs, then you will love Gray's and you can't argue about the price (which is \$3.50 for two dogs and a drink). Gray's is as much about the drink as it is about the dog and they feature an array of tropical fruit drinks, including an eponymous Papaya concoction.

There are three Gray's locations throughout the city, along with countless spinoffs and imitators of surprisingly similar quality—including one not too far from the Javits Center on 8th Avenue in the high '30's.

## Tuesday, December 4

Open Bar/Open Packs  
Fontana's Bar – 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.  
105 Eldridge St, between Broome and Grand, (212) 334-6740

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RULES

[Top8Magic.com](http://Top8Magic.com) is going to be hosting an open bar party on Tuesday evening on the Lower East Side. Your hosts will be me, Michael J. Flores, Matt Wang, and there should be a full cast of famous and not-so famous New York **Magic** players at this favorite watering hole of Matt's. It will be \$35 for three hours of open bar, and that will include one draft set and all the land you could need for drafting. The bar has ample tables and chairs and should, if the person from the bar is to be believed, even be well lit enough for ease of drafting.

If you are over 21 years of age—and have the documentation to prove it—I hope to see you Tuesday night to welcome you to Worlds!

#### **Best Sushi**

**Tomoe**

**172 Thompson St (between Bleecker and Houston), (212) 777-9346**

Thanks to the Pro Tour, I have had the opportunity to eat sushi all over the world, including some truly excellent meals in Hawaii and Japan. The sushi at this East Village hole in the wall is among the best of them. It is not cheap but nowhere near the exorbitant prices of more famous New York spots like Nobu. You can't get reservations because they don't take them; people get on line sometimes hours before they open for lunch or dinner. Not a one of them complains if they have ever eaten there before. I am sure to be making at least one trip here during the week of Worlds and may even lay down a coat of alcohol-absorbent sushi rice before the open bar at Fontana's.



## **Wednesday, December 5**

#### **Breakfast at the Chelsea Diner**

**23rd and 9th**

Whether you are starting off your day or winding it down, you can always find some good eggs in New York. It doesn't really matter which place you pick, but you can find cheap food 24 hours a day at any number of all-night diners in the city. I highlighted the Chelsea Diner, which is down the block from the infamous Chelsea Hotel, because it was only a few blocks from where Neutral Ground was located for more than a dozen years. It has been the site of many a late-night Anaconda Draft Sealed Deck Grand Melee over the years, and is sure to not flinch at the site of gamers playing out the final round of a draft over a hearty plate of eggs, pigs, and potatoes. You can hardly go wrong here regardless of the time of day.

#### **NEW YORK EATERIES**

Nowhere else in the world can offer the range and quality of restaurants of New York. There are plenty of options for all budgets, but if you want a slice of what the folks at Top8Magic.com think are the don't-miss places, click [here](#).

#### **Oversized Magic in the Park**

**Washington Square Park 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.**

If you missed the opportunity to play some oversized **Magic**, this will be the last chance before the doors to the Javits Center swing wide and the normal-sized decks are put through their paces. Again there should be swag while supplies last. I am going to running around all week in preparation for the tournament and I am unsure if I will be at this one, but you should not have a hard time spotting the guy with the giant Mountains in the park.

#### **Best Burger Battle**

**The Corner Bistro vs. La Esquina**

Maybe you can help me settle an ongoing argument I have had with Jon Finkel about the best burger in New York City. I have been eating burgers at the Corner Bistro (331 W 4th St, between Jane Street and 8th Avenue; (212) 242-9502) for longer than most of the people reading this column have been alive and it hardly seems like the prices have gone up at all during that loooooong span of time. This is completely unfancy but perfect fare. If you go—I recommend trying to slip in during the afternoon for lunch as the lines for this tiny treasure can be pretty long—just order a Bistro Burger, a plate of fries, and McSorley's Dark.

La Esquina (106 Kenmare St between Cleveland Place and Lafayette Street; (646) 613-7100) is a Mexican joint that should probably just hire one full-time delivery guy to run Mexican Burgers over to Jon Finkel's apartment during draft days. Jon concedes the excellence of the Bistro Burger but insists that this burger with avocado surpasses it. This is another tough seat to get, but if you happen to be staying in SoHo you might want to try ordering one for delivery ... that is, if all the delivery guys aren't shuttling back and forth to Jon's.

#### **Finally Magic!**

**Worlds Registration, Opening Ceremonies, Hall of Fame Induction, Player Part  
Javits Center, 5 p.m. – 10 p.m.**

If you are taking part in the [World Championships](#) then you can head over to the Javits Center and sign up for the main event starting at 5 p.m. If you are not taking part in the event, you should still make a beeline for Hall C of the Convention Center to see some of the greatest players in the history of **Magic** inducted into the third class of the [Pro Tour Hall of Fame](#).

I am looking forward to seeing all five members of this year's Hall of Fame class step up on stage and be acknowledged for their skill and contributions to the game:

- Randy Buehler: I have spent a lot of time with Randy over the last few years and am proud to call him my friend. I know



how much this honor means to him and it will be my true pleasure to see him enshrined.

- Nicolai Herzog: I will always remember being stunned when Nicolai Herzog won his second Limited Pro Tour in one year. I was even more stunned when less than a year later Nicolai was not playing on the Pro Tour after Gabriel Nassif stole the Player of the Year title out from under him. It will be great to have Herzog playing the game regularly again.
- Tsuyoshi Fujita: The first time I ever really watched Tsuyoshi play **Magic** was at my first solo coverage experience at Grand Prix–Bangkok. Despite making the finals of Pro Tour–Tokyo years ago, Tsuyoshi was still an unknown quantity at that time, and trying to change that made my first assignment so much easier.
- Zvi Mowshowitz: I have known Zvi for as long as I have been involved in **Magic** and cannot imagine this game without him. I am excited to see what an excited Zvi does in this tournament, as he has been preparing for this event quite seriously. Don't be surprised if he does very well in his return to competitive play.
- Kai Budde: He won the last Pro Tour that was held in this city ... how about an encore performance? You just have to look at Kai's absurd record to know that anything is possible when Kai plays **Magic**.



### **Overnight Magic**

#### **Neutral Ground**

**15 West 37th, Ground Floor (between 5th and 6th Avenue)**

The **Magic** won't begin at the Javits Center until Thursday morning, but if you are craving drafts, Standard, or some friendly faces you can find them overnight, every night during Worlds at Neutral Ground. Instead of keeping the event hall open all night at the Convention Center, there will be shuttle buses taking people back and forth to New York's first **Magic** Tournament Center which will have just celebrated its Grand Reopening in a store front location the previous Saturday.

## **Thursday, December 6**

### **Standard Bearers**

#### **World Championships, Day One**

Day One of the World Championships kicks off with Standard and players all over the World have huddled in their workshops with the decklists from States / Champs and Grand Prix–Krakow to determine the secret formula to the format.

Rumors of a super secret Cheontourage build have begun to circulate as U.S. National Champion Luis Scott-Vargas and Player-of-the-Year contender Paul Cheon look to follow up on their surprising OmniChord deck from U.S. Nationals and Blue-white Pickles from Grand Prix–Krakow.

Sonic Boomer Guillaume Wafo-Tapa and a legion of top French deck builders are also hard at work looking to shake up Standard like they did at last year's World Championships with the format shattering Project X and Dralnu du Louvre.

One French player that is not working with his countrymen is seven-time Pro Tour Top 8 finisher and a member of last year's Top 8, Gabriel Nassif. He's is joining forces once again with Mark Herberholz with the recent addition of Patrick "The Innovator" Chapin.

### **Lorwyn Limited**

#### **World Championships, Day One**

With Worlds down to four full days this year, the draft portion has been split into two days (instead of being a stand-alone day), with one draft and three rounds of play each day. This will be the first opportunity to experience *Lorwyn* Limited with no variance from a day-one Sealed Deck as we have had at the recent Grand Prix. By the end of Thursday, we'll have eight rounds in the books and the Player of the Year race could be coming in to focus.

Player of the Year frontrunner Tomoharu Saito has not missed an opportunity to pick up Pro Points in any of the *Lorwyn* Limited Grand Prix he has traveled to over the past few months. He could use these rounds to create even more distance between himself and some of the other players chasing him, including fellow Japanese players Shingou Kurihara and Kenji Tsumura.

### **Public Events**

#### **Javits Center**

One of the popular misconceptions about Pro Tours in general is that they are not open to the public, but that could not be further from the truth. Normally there is plenty to do for players not qualified for the main event, but there has never been any event that can stack up in that regard like 2007 Worlds. At 11 a.m. on Thursday, the first of nine events that will feed people into the "[Win a Car](#)" Tournament will begin. The format is Two-Headed Giant *Lorwyn* Sealed and the top two teams will qualify for this

exclusive tournament where first prize is a \$30,000 car. On top of that, the winning team of this 2HG event will earn a pair of high-end mp3 players.

You can find the complete schedule of Vroom! Events, along with the rest of the public events, [here](#).

Send a Salami to Your Standing Army Katz's

#### PUBLIC EVENT PRIZES

Not qualified for the main event? Come on down and try your hand at winning one of these prizes open to the public.

30 GB Zune  
160 GB iPod  
Original art piece of **Vigor**  
Display box of non-English *Exodus* or non-English *Urza's Destiny*  
8 GB iPhone  
Garmin Street Pilot  
80 GB Arcos Media Player  
160 GB iPod classic  
Lorwyn Premium Card Set Magic canvas art print  
iPod Shuffle  
160 GB Apple TV

- [Complete schedule of Public Events](#)

**Delicatessen – 8 p.m.**

**205 E Houston St (on Ludlow Street), (212) 254-2246**

If you have ever read any of Mike Flores's columns, you have no doubt seen at least one reference to Katz's Delicatessen—one of his absolute favorite places to eat in the whole world. Mike opts for the brisket over the "too flavorful" pastrami which may betray a deep mental illness, but regardless you can see for yourself on Thursday night when Mike and Matt Wang from Top8Magic.com will be podcasting at Katz's.

When you go into Katz's you will be handed a ticket—don't lose it. Whenever you order something it gets marked off on your ticket and then they tally you up from the ticket when you leave. You can get waiter service but if you go up cafeteria-style, a well-placed tip will result in samples of the succulent meat while it is carved in front of you by the grizzled service staff.

## Friday, December 7

**Chase Rare Control or Enduring Ideal Pro Tour–Hollywood Qualifier, 9 a.m.**

That will be the question on players' minds as they look at the top two decks from Pro Tour–Valencia for Friday's Pro Tour–Hollywood Qualifier. This event could be sparsely attended as many of the local PTQ kids will be stuck in school and is a great opportunity to get a jump at the first PTQ for the next American Pro Tour.

**Northeast Worlds Challenge 5 p.m.**

Starcitygames columnist Sean McKeown won an invite to this event at Neutral Ground and will be one of 102 players fighting for the last eight spots in the 32-person ["Win a Car" Tournament](#). If you want to see how fast players can scramble to build decks, just watch how many of the Day One undefeated Standard decklists show up in this field. To see a list of players who qualified via the Northeast Challenge Qualifiers a couple weeks ago, [click here](#). If you're one of those lucky players, I'm told there isn't a specific registration time for the event, but you need to check in at the Public Events Tournament Registration desk by 4:45 p.m.

**Super Friday Night Magic 6 p.m.**

There were over 200 competitors in this event at Pro Tour–Valencia and I am really hoping that New York can shatter that record for SFNM attendance. The format is Sealed Deck—the format of choice for NYC FNM's going back to 1995 before there was even an FNM—and at the end of four rounds everyone with at least two wins will win two foils and a booster pack. The more rounds you win, the more foils and boosters you can win. If you choose to play rather than eat dinner, you're covered. Each player at Super Friday Night **Magic** will receive a coupon for a free soda and slice of pizza.

**Friday Night Munchies**



*The first of nine qualifier events for the Win a Car Tournament is held Thursday morning.*

#### VROOM! EVENTS

You have nine chances to qualify for the 32-person ["Win a Car" Tournament](#), to be played Sunday at 9 a.m. Pick your day, pick your format, and good luck! The top two players (or top two 2HG teams) from each event earn a Sunday spot. Registration for each event opens approximately one hour before the scheduled start time.

#### Thursday

11:00am Zune 2HG – 2HG Lorwyn Sealed  
1:00pm iPod Legacy – Legacy Constructed  
3:00pm Magic Art Sealed – Lorwyn

If you're not sticking around for Super Friday Night Pizza, you'll be looking to dine out on the town. The biggest problem with finding a place to eat in New York can be narrowing it down from all the options. Reservations can be an issue at any of the higher-end joints and if you want to try a Luger's Steak (recently voted the best steak in America by one food magazine), you may already be out of luck but there is always a great neighborhood restaurant to try.

Try the Film Center Café (635 9th Ave) or Hell's Kitchen (679 9th Ave) on 9th Avenue north of 42nd Street for two of my favorite places to grab a mid-priced dinner in a relaxed setting. If you fail at either of those two, there are dozens upon dozens of different places you can try from 42nd up to the 50's along that avenue.

## Saturday, December 8

### National Teams of Giants World Championships, Day Three

After years of three-man Team Rochester, the National Team competition has been ported over to Two-Headed Giant. This also meant that national teams have been expanded to four full members (rather than three and an alternate). It's a full day of three drafts, with two rounds played after each draft. You will be able to follow multiple team drafts courtesy of our spanking new 2HG Draft Viewer.

### Last Chance for Qualifying

If you are unable to make the Thursday or Friday public events, then Saturday will be your only chance to qualify for the "[Win a Car](#)" [Tournament](#) on Sunday. There are three Vroom! tournaments Saturday, including Legacy.

### Question Mark!

#### Trivia with Mark Rosewater, 9 p.m.

Once a fixture on the Pro Tour scene, Mark Rosewater is rarely let out of his house to attend **Magic** tournaments anymore and limits his attendance to the Invitational and Worlds. What does this mean to you? It means you get to play Mark at the gunslinging station all weekend, and on Saturday night you and two teammates can try to win a trio of iPod Shuffles by taking part in Question Mark. Question Mark is a unique side event that tests your knowledge of **Magic: The Gathering** and can include questions on any number of topics, such as mana costs, flavor text, illustrators, and creature types (to name just a few). It is a **Magic** game show done in the inimitable Mark Rosewater style.

## Sunday, December 9

### Bagels and Brunch

#### H&H Bagels, 2239 Broadway (on W 80th Street); (212) 595-8000

A Sunday morning in New York City is just not complete without bagels and cream cheese (and possibly the Sunday New York Times if you are in the mood for some heavy lifting). If you have time, I suggest you head up to H&H Bagels—or if you can pool cab fare and send someone to pick up a big bag of bagels and condiments to bring back down, even better. It might be a little out of the way, so if you're in more of a hurry you should be able to find bagel stores almost anywhere ... and the product will likely be better than any bagels you may have experienced anywhere else. Make sure you are getting a bagel at a store that makes fresh bagels. A shrink-wrapped factory bagel is going to taste as bad in New York as they taste everywhere else. If you are looking to try something more uniquely New York, you can get a toasted bialy (kind of like a flat bagel).

### Win a Car

#### "Win a Car" Tournament, 9 a.m.

The 32-player field will be set, the Standard decks will be chosen ... it's time to [give away a car!](#) The winner of this tournament gets a 2007 Toyota FJ Cruiser (with optional **Magic**-themed wrap). 'Nuff said.

### Lights, Camera, Action!

#### Sunday Webcast, 1 p.m.

All the stories will converge on Sunday and be played out before the cameras on the webcast. We will even bring the Hall of Fame storyline full circle, since the freshly inducted Randy Buehler will be in the booth with me as we showcase the top individuals and teams before crowning new World Champions. If you are in the hall, you can watch all the action play out live and of course you can follow along from home. If the script follows through from the past two seasons with another photo finish Player of the Year race, we might not know the winner of that title until the Top 8 has played out.

### Free-for-All Frenzy

#### Multiplayer Free-for-All -- Standard Constructed, 3 p.m.

Sealed	
<b>Friday</b>	
11:00am	iPhone Sealed – Lorwyn Sealed
1:00pm	Streetpilot 2HG – 2HG Lorwyn Sealed
3:00pm	Arcos Constructed – Standard Constructed
<b>Saturday</b>	
11:00am	iPod Constructed– Standard Constructed
1:00pm	Lorwyn Set 2HG – 2HG Lorwyn Sealed
3:00pm	"Box" Constructed – Legacy Constructed



Name	Pro Points
1. Tomoharu Saito	63
2. Kenji Tsumura	57
3. Shingou Kurihara	55
4. Guillaume Wafo-Tapa	52
5. Olivier Ruel	51
6. Paul Cheon	49
7. Raphael Levy	44
8. Mark Herberholz	39
9. Shuhei Nakamura	38
10. Mike Hron	37

• For complete standings, click [here](#).

If you are still looking for a different **Magic** experience on Sunday, you can play in a non-sanctioned Melee (a long-standing New York tradition) to close out your week of **Magic**. There will be eight tables of eight players feeding up to one final eight person table. Since this tournament is not sanctioned you can expect to see Wizards of the Coast personnel such as Aaron Forsythe, Mark Rosewater, and Elaine Chase at several tables, along with some of the great players from the history of the New York **Magic** scene—including Pro Tour/Masters/Grand Prix Champion Mike Pustilnik.

### Late Night Eats

Late Sunday night can be a challenge in many tournament locations when looking for food, but that is not the case in New York. In addition to the all-night diners, dog stands, and pizza joints there are several neighborhoods like Korea Town, Chinatown, and Little Tokyo that serve late into the night. Whether it is Wo Hops in Chinatown or Kim Gang San in K-Town, you should be able to get a taste of what makes New York such a great place to live!

That wraps up my all-too-brief preview of the week ahead. If you're anywhere remotely close to New York, you have to find a way to get here. Every World Championships has its own unique story, and playing against the backdrop of NYC couldn't be any better.

See you in New York!

## Firestarter: Hall of Fame Game

Of the fifteen members of the Hall of Fame, I am fully expecting 10 of them to be competing, with only Olle Rade, Tommi Hovi, Dave Humpherys, Alan Comer, and Randy Buehler not suiting up for Round One. Gary Wise has said that he would be attending, Jon Finkel and Zvi are playtesting with each other, and rumor has it that the Dark Confidant himself is getting back into the game.

Which of the 10 potential competitors will finish the highest in the standings at the World Championships? Jon Finkel, Darwin Kastle, Rob Dougherty, Bob Maher, Gary Wise, Raphael Levy, Nicolai Herzog, Tsuyoshi Fujita, Zvi Mowshowitz, or Kai Budde? Head to the forums and share your opinions.

*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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