

BENELUX BULLETIN #9

RIVALS OF IXALAN

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INTRODUCTION

Alex De Bruijne
level 2 from Vlissingen

Welcome to the new BeNeLux Bulletin!

We find ourselves at the start of a new year. The region already got some good news: We've got an emperor team of Grand Prix Head Judges in our region now! Congratulations to Frank Wareman, Jurgen Baert and Emilien Wild for (once more) representing our region at the highest level of judging. This year promises to become even better. With two regional GP's (Amsterdam and Brussels),

a superb judge conference weekend in June and two judge dinners every set this will truly be a year full of judging opportunities!

Inside this bulletin you'll find a great selection of articles on new and old subjects. Naturally, we've got you covered on the rules updates and the who's who of new judges. We also have an article with some tips and tricks on how to keep things fun for everyone at your local events.

Last but not least, there is a great community success story in these pages from the hand of Cécile.

May this year be a good year for all of us!

01 IT'S ALL ABOUT FUN

Ah, Magic. A nice evening with friends, slinging spells, relaxing after a long day. Trying out your latest tournament list or playing pack wars with Unstable boosters, because why not? But is everyone having fun? Are we the welcoming and inclusive environment we want to be? Maybe that playmat with the eroticized Chandra is upsetting some people? Maybe that slightly racist joke was in bad taste? Maybe some



people feel uncomfortable with the political discussion on immigration going on in the corner? In an ideal world, we would only need to concern ourselves with rules questions and event logistics while judging. In the real world, however, we have an obligation to the players to try our best to maintain a level of fun for everyone. And that means we will sometimes have to tell people to adjust their behavior, to please put that playmat away, to talk about



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something else in the tournament venue. But I'm judging, I don't have time to enter a philosophical debate on freedom of speech! Don't. All you need to do, is tell the offending person that their behavior could make others feel uncomfortable. There's no need to have a discussion on morality. For example, the somewhat racist joke situation. You can either go into an argument about whether those jokes are okay, whether it is ok to offend people and so on, in which you are unlikely to convince the other person of your point and probably won't have rectified the situation at all. Or you could just say: "Hey, I'm glad you're having fun, but that joke was rather in bad taste and it could make people feel a bit uncomfortable, would you mind being a bit more careful with that in future?" All you're saying is that people could feel uncomfortable. All the previous arguments about right to offend and such are gone. You're simply stating a truth. It's very hard to argue with that. In my experience, the only counterarguments to that are "Well, I'm not offended by that," or "I have a different threshold for taking offense." And as you may have spotted, they are actually trying to drag the argument back into the first type of discussion. All this makes no difference as it all boils down to this: one of our primary objectives is to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment. That goal has potentially been tarnished. We will step in. It matters not one iota how we personally feel or what the offending player thinks. We're not even saying you're wrong, or how dare you. We're just saying that this may have been offensive and to please don't do it again at a Magic event. We must do this. Calling players out on this is not a fun thing to do. But keep in mind that it's only a small action that will safeguard the fun of others at the event. After all, the needs of the many....



02 COMMUNITY, A LOVE STORY

It probably all started with prereleases. From the day I began, I immediately fell in love with judging prereleases and all the aspects of it: my first judge calls, helping people to build their decks, sharing the good mood, all the logistics behind it, giving out prizes... I quickly realized that being a judge could offer me more than just delivering rulings. In my opinion, improving your community and making your players happy is a big undertaking that cannot really be summed up in a few ideas, but here are two illustrated points I wanted to share with you:

1. Reinstating constructed FNM

I was certified in April 2016 and, after a very inspiring Judge Conference, I was wondering what I could do to improve the players' feelings towards the LGS. This is when having a good relationship with the TOs came into play; I kept showing more and more involvement in community but, though I am very player-focused, I soon noticed that the TOs have their side of the story too and I found that communication wasn't very efficient between the two parties. I can also say that my LGS is very diversified: Pokémon, Yu-Gi-Oh!, computer, boardgames and more. Listening to every community is not always easy. I realized that I could be a kind of relay between the two parties. It also occurred to me that we had a very strong Modern community and players didn't have that many chances to play their favorite format. So, I took some time to make my inquiries: I asked a lot of players if they would be interested in playing constructed FNMs, players were very enthusiastic about the idea



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which made it very easy for me to ask my TOs if I could create such events on Facebook to advertise for Modern FNMs. We discussed pricing and logistics and I ended up creating a Facebook group for Constructed FNMs, alternating Modern and Standard. At first I thought it was easy, but just putting the events online wasn't enough. I managed to launch the Modern ones but Standard wasn't working for my community. I discovered something about the players: they're not going to come to you and say "Hello, could it be possible that you arrange a Legacy FNM? It's my favorite format" By actually judging those FNMs and talking to new players I saw there was a demand for Legacy. The question could be very simple: "Do you only play Modern?", "What do you think of alternating Standard and Modern?" It sounds very formal but just have some games of Modern and a Friday night ambiance where you're judging and you'll see that the players will be more than happy to be asked for what they want. This will also give your TOs more incentive to listen to you if you connect and really listen to people. He or she will see that it's in everyone's interest to change the routine.

During the summer, I started to personalize my events by giving fun titles such as “Modern Time!”, “Back to School - Legacy FNM”. After which it shifted to me giving themes to the FNMs, based on my tastes or funny things but always in order to bring people together.

In the end my TOs gave me access to editing my own events on the official page of the LGS, which I’m really happy about: I can create fun events for FNM in the format people wants (and still share them on my FNM constructed group) and I can handle player’s questions on our official page.

What’s next: My TOs really liked the “theme” thing so we are actually in discussion to make something better out of it. Not every week, but maybe once a month (based on the famous “Cookie Monster Edition” the first idea would be to give a cookie for each registration).

The schedule of the format: At some point, Standard was really unpopular (at least in my shop) and now Legacy is a thing. But FNM failed to launch every two weeks, so after consultation with the players, we are probably going to trade one Legacy FNM for a Standard one.

Long story short, I ended up last Friday (December 1st, 2017) with twelve happy players, one happy TO and one really satisfied judge. For me, being able to make everybody happy was one of my biggest achievements so far.



that judges are scary. I honestly think that showing genuine interest in people will make you be seen as a positive element in their game experience.

During a prerelease, if you’re active in your community, it will be very easy to notify new players, identify yourself as a kind figure, help out with building decks and be talkative (if possible). Introduce yourself not only in the announcement, be also accessible.

At one of my latest prereleases, one girl I saw at some previous prereleases came to register and she told me “I’m glad you’re here because my friend couldn’t come and without you I



2. Interaction with new players and absorbing them into the community

Building trust and interacting with new players takes several steps, but as stated earlier, you cannot magically sum up how to do such things. I was lucky enough to judge with a lot of talented people, and sharing experiences will help improve yourself. As a very uncertain person, I can also tell you this: your point of view matters and it’s worth sharing.

Through this article, I wish to destroy the old player’s myth



wouldn’t know anybody”.

First of all, it felt great that she felt confident enough to come alone. She was quite new to the game, so I naturally offered my help to build her deck, but also asked the players around her if they could help too. I admit it was very easy for me because I know my players very well - a simple “Hey B. you know T.? She started to play not so long ago” and the whole

table ended up helping her with the deck. She hasn’t missed any prerelease since.

Introducing players to each other seems a bit childish but it can have great results. For instance, when we recently opened the league in Brussels, a lot of players registered and built decks. So I created a group and was there at the beginning and now the group and the league manage themselves.

Explaining how things such as drafts, GPs and formats work is also very important. I started to play not so long ago, so I remember what it’s like when you don’t know. I actually have the perfect anecdote that fits all the points I previously described:

At a Modern FNM some months ago two brothers showed up with homemade, inefficient Modern decks. The FNM went on and as the other players and myself talked with them, we realized that they just started magic and built their decks with the small amount of cards they had.

We had some discussions and then I explained to them how draft works: curve, spell, creatures, colors and also the value of the cards.

Some months later, they wanted to go to their first GP (Metz was pretty close to us). Of course, they didn’t know what to expect. So I pictured that for them. We met at the GP and they were having fun playing sealed and draft. They even won some rounds! Which is pretty great in your first year of magic and your very first GP.

End of the story, not so long ago I asked how their draft went: one of them made 3-0!

So even starting with a very unpleasant situation (making 0-3 in a format you don’t know with people you’ve never met), we still managed to make them come and play again.

I do want to stress that even if I took care of the explaining part, during their first FNM the other players were very welcoming.

Geoffrey, me and Jeremy at GP Metz 2017 (I asked permission to use the picture in my article)

I can’t finish this article without a word about my little mascot: Jean-Eudes!

I consider him a landmark, he has some positive and fun impact on the casual events and on me... but that’s for my next article.

Scorekeeping/ cosplaying at Ixalan’s prerelease

That’s all for today, thanks a lot for reading.

Kisses and Mana,

Cécile “Sto” Denaux.



03 WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

These judges have joined our side in the search for a better community

- Emilyen Laffineur - Namur - Belgium
- Arne Thielemans - Leuven - Belgium
- Ashley De Winter - Antwerp - Belgium



04 MINI CONFERENCE RIVALS OF IXALAN



Mark Dragstra
level 2 from Tilburg

The very first ever mini conference of the Benelux was held Thursday evening before the prerelease of Rivals of Ixalan in game store 'De Dobbelsteen' in Den Bosch. This mini conference combined with dinner was a bit more casual compared to our other conferences. Advertisement wasn't really needed, since the mini conference was almost fully booked within two days.

Everybody dropped in on their own time, engaging in conversations and/or playing games until dinner arrived. Every attendee could choose between pizza, sushi, kebab, noodles or "bring your own food". After dinner, the serious part started with three seminars:

Mechanic(s) of Rivals of Ixalan - Mark Dragstra

I wanted to discuss all the new mechanics, but unfortunately there's only one. I managed to ask five dif-

ferent questions about Ascend, but the bottom line is: If you have 10 permanents, how brief it might be (e.g. legendary rule), ascend meets the criteria and is in effect immediately. Fortunately there are also Card-Specific Notes to dive into. A big lesson I've learned there is that "read the card" applies not only for taking calls, but also for manufacturing interesting questions. One question stood out where the audience was doubtful of the answer. Bishop of Binding exiled a crewed Dusk Legion Dreadnought. What amount is X in the Bishops second ability? Answer is at the end of this report.



Dealing with angry players - Anniek van der Peijl

This seminar used the theory of how to handle a “bad news conversation” (e.g. firing someone) on unfavorable rulings given to players. What stood out for me the most is that after you bring the bad news (e.g. game loss), you have to be silent and let the receiver work out his or her emotions. In short, these are the five steps portrayed in the seminar:

- 1. SHORT introduction
- 2. Bringing the news
- 3. Make space for an emotional
- 4. Further info / explanation / questions
- 5. Next steps / the future



Running Competitive Events: assorted tips & tricks - Toby Hazes

As the title already proclaimed, Toby went all over the place with this seminar. He talked about different limited decklists (conclusion: use the version on JudgeApps), double faced cards and (opaque) sleeves, photo deck checks, judge attire and equipment. The latter being shown by Toby in the picture.

It’s safe to say that the first mini conference was a success and I hope to see you at one of the next editions. Oh, I almost forgot to give the answer to my question. If a Vehicle is exiled with Bishop of Binding, use its printed power to determine the value of X, so X is 4.

Until the next mini-conference!
Mark Dragstra

05 CHANGES IN THE DOCUMENTS

There are only a couple of small changes to the Magic Tournament Rules (MTR) and Infraction Procedure Guide (IPG), which I’ll briefly discuss below.

MTR

Status of players

The status of players is now explicitly free information. This counts for Ascend (receiving the City’s Blessing) and Monarch.

(Life) Tracking

Players are already obligated to verbally announce life total changes. This is now extended to poison and energy counters as well. Furthermore, players aren’t allowed to use dice at competitive and professional REL to track these totals. Pen and paper or electronic life trackers(e.g. Boogie Board) are recommended. Devices able to communicate (internet, sms) are not allowed.

Silver bordered cards

Silver bordered cards were recently allowed at sanctioned casual tournaments. This inspired the change that they are now perceived as real Magic cards, but they’re only allowed in formats that explicitly permit them.

Even smaller changes

- The tournament shortcut about retaining priority has been split into two. One covers auto-passing priority and the other what happens when someone adds multiple objects to the stack.
- The wording on Bribery is tweaked to make it clear that the restriction on prizes already won still applies to the finals exception.



Mark Dragstra
level 2 from Tilburg

IPG

Partial fixes

There’s an extra sentence at the partial fixes paragraph explaining how to handle triggers caused by that fix. “Triggered abilities are generated from these partial fixes only if they would have occurred had the action been taken at the correct time.”

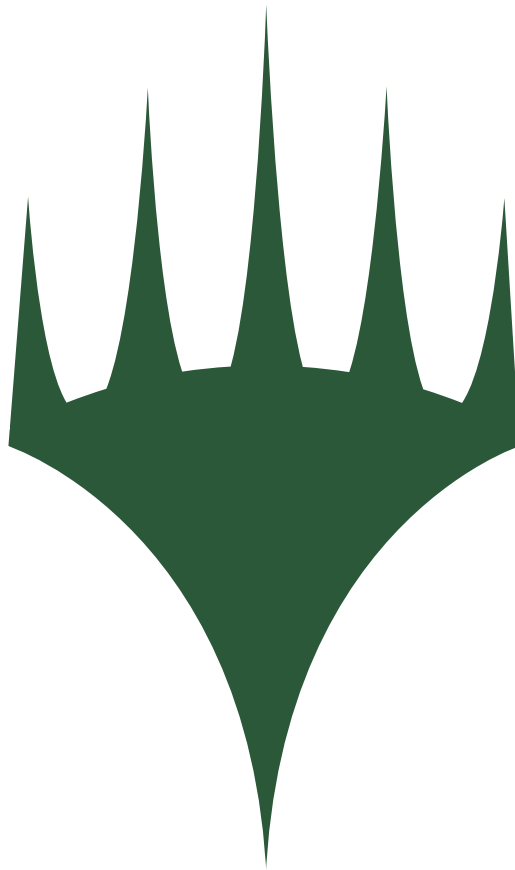
Backups

The last few sentences on how to perform backups regarding shuffling have been reworded. The new wording about shuffling is: “Actions that caused a player to learn the identity of cards at a specific location in the library are reversed by shuffling those cards into the random portion of the library unless they were subsequently drawn; cards being returned to the library as part of the backup should not be shuffled at that stage if their identity was known to only one player.”

BANNED AND RESTRICTED CARDS

Standard is shaken once more with four bans. As of Friday 19-01-2018, the following cards are banned in Standard:

- Attune with Aether
- Rogue Refiner
- Rampaging Ferocidon
- Ramunap Ruins



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NEWSLETTER

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