

Appeal! Dark Overlord!

Head judging and interacting with head judges at large events

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Contents

1. Objectives
2. Overview: Unique Responsibilities of Head Judges, Leading other judges, Coordinating with TOs, Significant penalties/upgrades/downgrades, Backups, Investigations, Owning the call, Appeals.
3. The Role of a Head Judge
4. Practice

Objectives

1. L2+ judges should feel better prepared to lead staff at events and to handle appeals and possible deviations.
2. Increase comfort level when interacting with HJs at large events; learn when and how to escalate issues, what penalties they must consult the HJ for, and how to bring an appeal to the attention of a HJ.

Overview

What is a HJ responsible for?

- Interpreting the rules
- Adjudicating disputes
- Providing final approval for all official decisions
- Ensuring rule and policy violations are handled appropriately
- Providing final rulings on all appeals, including overturning floor judge rulings
- Coordinating and delegating to floor judges
- Designating the person who assumes their duties in their absence
- Answering to the TO, the judge program, and WoTC about the integrity of the event.
- Guiding the event, from start to finish

Group Discussion Activity - (In groups of three)

- **Opening Announcements:** When you think of what great announcements should be what comes to mind? What is essential, helpful, and unnecessary in good opening announcements?
 - i. Set the tone for the event. This can include some humor. This should take the opportunity to make players from all areas feel welcome at the event, and that the judge staff are approachable should they have concerns.

- ii. Explain the essentials - REL, number of rounds, format, any relevant logistics information.
- iii. Explain how to call a judge and to encourage it. Never assume all players in your event know how to do so.
- iv. Explain how the appeals process works. Frame this in a positive light, we would rather err on the side of players being aware and asking for appeals than players feeling uncomfortable and remaining silent.

The Role of a Head Judge

○ **Leading other judges**

- *Be aware of strengths and weaknesses of all judges at the event, including yourself.* Check in with judges you haven't worked with recently, and/or their mentors, before you post the teams and schedule. This will give you the opportunity to find out any requests or circumstances the judges may have going into the event. (e.g. health concerns, specific team requests, or specific teammate / judge mentor requests)
- *Build the schedule and team breakdown for your event.* The TO/Judge manager may want to weigh in, but the event is ultimately your responsibility. The more staff and larger the event, the more specific you want to be with responsibilities. Be sure to give your staff enough lead time to understand their position and ask questions.
- *Understand which judges are in a position where they will likely need support and which can operate more independently.* You ideally will check in with all your judges and leads but you can't be everywhere at once and you have to prioritize. This may change over the course of the day.
- *Have a staff meeting where you can set expectations, identify challenges, and get the chance to introduce yourself to your team.* Treat this with as much respect and planning as you do your opening announcements.
- *Have a breaks schedule filled out ASAP and communicate it to staff.*
- *Breaks are a trust exercise between all staff.* HJs should protect a judge's break as much as possible, and floor judges should respect how much coordination goes into ensuring they get a break and take full advantage of it to rest and recharge.
- *If you are a floor judge or team lead don't be afraid to seek out the HJ for support, clarification, or ideas.* If they are doing their job correctly they will check in at some point, but that may not be in time with your needs as the

day goes on. Be as specific and succinct as possible when talking to the HJ, as they may have other priorities they need to balance. Trust them to politely communicate if they are busy. Some exceptions apply.

- **Coordinating with TOs**

- *HJs are not responsible for advertising events*, ensuring the suitability of the venue, the materials and product, ensuring the event is uploaded to WoTC.
- *Clear communication on expectations to TOs is important to build a good working relationship.* Be proactive in assisting TOs but communicate expectations and boundaries.
- *You are the TO's liaison to the players and the player's liaison to the TO.* Don't let either one affect the integrity of the event, the other party is counting on you.

- **Significant penalties, upgrades/downgrades, and backups**

- *What are all the penalties that need to be brought to the attention of the HJ?*
 - All Game Loss/Match Loss except for Tardiness and Decklist Problem. (Outside Assistance, USC Major, Improperly Determining a Winner, Bribery, Aggressive Behavior, Theft, Stalling, Cheating)
 - Hidden Card Error Upgrade. Deck Problem Upgrade (Discovered during presentation, revealed/about to be revealed to opponent, additional main deck cards). Marked Cards Upgrade, Unsporting Conduct Minor Upgrade
 - Hidden Card Error no upgrade is usually to be brought to L3+ judges and leads at large events.
- *Backups beyond a simple backup need be brought to the HJ.* Backups typically have many decision points and a fresh pair of eyes is important to avoid missing anything. If you can't concisely explain your backup to the HJ there is a good chance you should review your plan.
**Note: At GPs and some large events, L3s and team leads may be authorized to do backups.*
 - What is a simple backup?
- *All other backups need to be brought to the HJ for multiple reasons.* The player experience will be better when they feel the HJ has looked over the ruling. These penalties are difficult to reverse if made in error, and are typically tense interactions.
- *Even if you have a complete handle on your case remember you are still presenting it to the HJ (or designated team lead).* Respect that they can disagree with you and investigate further. Do present with confidence. Do not selectively edit or alter the explanation of events, when presenting it.

- **Investigations**

- *There are two typical ways a HJ can become involved in an investigation.*
Long term investigations and joining an investigation.
 - *Long term investigations are when suspicious behaviour has been noticed but needs follow up.* This information needs to be collected but the HJ can't dedicate their time to it. It is still important to raise these issues to the HJ so that cheaters can't take advantage of different judges operating under separate sets of information. The HJ should communicate to other leads and scorekeepers to be vigilant.
 - *Joining an investigation is where a floor judge identifies that an investigation may result in a significant penalty and proactively brings in the HJ as previously discussed.* The HJ will take in all available information, including the investigation of the floor judge(s) and will conduct their own investigation before ruling.

- **Owning the call**

- *There is no final higher authority at any given event on the rules than the HJ.* When you issue rulings be sure you have prepared yourself to deliver the ruling with confidence. Great HJs can get players to thank them for their efforts even when they are DQd from an event. When taking an appeal the ruling is now your ruling.
- *You may be put in a HJ position with experienced floor judges, some of whom you may feel are more capable in a particular situation.* Be diplomatic when approaching them for assistance and avoid deflecting the result onto judges you consulted.
- *Be prepared for when you issue your ruling, other information could come to light or spectators (or TOs) could attempt to influence your ruling.* Taking a moment to steel yourself against the initial wave of 'feel bads' is important.
- *Remember that in most cases you are informing the TO of your ruling.* You should not ask them for permission to rule in a certain way. The only exception to this is whether someone is permitted to remain in the venue.
- *Judges, Magic Tournaments and TOs are not the law.* You do not have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt.

- **Appeals**

- *The important pieces of information to every appeal are*
 - Summary of Events,
 - Infraction,

- Penalty,
 - Table Number,
 - Duration of the call,
 - which player is appealing and why.
- *The floor judge can be appealed even for things that aren't infractions, such as choosing to not give a penalty, moving player as per the scorekeeper's instructions, or instructing spectators.*
- *Leave a floor judge with the table to ensure no information is lost or altered while you find the HJ.* This floor judge shouldn't involve themselves in the investigation unless new information is revealed in the absence of the judge taking the call and the HJ, or if they were involved in the call prior to being asked to monitor the players.
- *Don't display behaviour reserved for emergency situations when on an appeal.* Approaching the HJ with urgency is often confused with jogging/running at the HJ, or yelling appeal well before you are close enough to carry on a conversation.
- *Be sure to finish speaking to the HJ about all the points of the appeal before you are within earshot of the players involved.* The HJ may need a moment to wrap their mind around all the issues involved in the call and may have follow up questions.
- *If you get appealed don't take it as a sleight.* Many times the floor judge's rulings are clearly correct and players are appealing because they want to 'just see if the judge rules the other way'. It is important to ensure players feel that the HJ paid due attention to the ruling. The player experience of having another senior judge consulted on a ruling can go a long way to making players more comfortable.
- *Once the HJ has arrived they should conduct their own investigation and rule as appropriate.* They just get the added resource of the floor judge's investigation and any other information the floor judge may have. Do not feel beholden to the floor judge's ruling, but be ready to explain to the judge in private if you overturned their ruling. Keep in mind that when players are retelling their story to the HJ that this is likely not their first time, be sure to check in with the floor judge and see if stories have changed.
- **Deviation**
 - *Deviation is not something to be done lightly.* It is only to be done in 'unique exceptional circumstances'. Examples in the IPG include tables being destroyed. Reality isn't quite as dire and floor judges are may

suggest deviations when appropriate to the HJ. Treating deviation without the feeling of last resort is dangerous.

- *Only the HJ may deviate.* Do not suggest or mention deviation to the players before consulting with the HJ.
- *The judge that deviates frequently becomes 'Other Judge' and creates problem not only for yourself but other judges.*
- *Always explain when you are deviating that what you are doing is a deviation due to unique circumstances.* If you can't explain why you are deviating to the players and any judges involved, then should take that as a warning sign.
- **Examples - (Insert or gather your own examples of deviations)**
- **These examples are not gospel or what you do going forward.**

Practice

- **Owning the call**
 - What are the specific criteria for the following offenses?
 - Cheating
 - Broken a rule,
 - Knowingly, and
 - For their own benefit.
 - Stalling
 - Player exhibits a pace of play to gain advantage
 - Must be knowingly doing so
 - USC Major
 - Any behaviour that could reasonably make a player feel harassed, threatened, bullied, or stalked. Aka unwelcome at the event.
 - Does not have to actually elicit such a response from the player the behaviour was directed at
 - If the player does not display remorse or does display malicious intent, or repeats the behaviour then DQ the player.
 - Hidden Card Error - Upgrade
 - Did the opponent have the opportunity to verify this information or otherwise give them permission?
 - Is there a morph in hand? Have cards been added to the hand?
 - Did they call judge on themselves?

- **Appeals**

- *HJ Practice:* Here are some scenarios where a floor judge has brought you an appeal. Correct them as needed.
 - I have an appeal. The hidden card error I spoke to you about appealed. Table 15.
 - Active player cast a Thoughtseize in response to an Angel's Grace, caught it after they had passed the turn and drawn. Ruled GRV/Failure to maintain and backed it up. Non-active player appealed because they didn't like backup. Table 3, 8 minutes into the call.
 - I have an appeal. Player was rude and cut me off as I was given them a slow play warning. They counted their lands and spells in their graveyard four times on their turn. Two minutes into the call, table 23.
- *Floor Judge Practice:* You have just made a ruling as floor judge. Assuming the player you are ruling against appeals, what information do you present to the HJ
 - Abigail is playing in a sealed PPTQ. She sits down for game 1 of her match at table 13, grabs a pile of roughly 40 sleeved cards out of her deck box, shuffles, and presents to her opponent. Upon drawing her opening hand, she immediately calls a judge and explains that this is her sideboard. She has several other sets of cards sleeved for quick sideboarding, and she just grabbed the wrong pile from her deck box. (Deck problem, forced mull)
 - Arthur and Neil are playing in a Modern PPTQ at table 34. With 19 minutes left in the round, at the end of Arthur's turn, Neil taps out to cast Peer Through Depths. Arthur responds with Dispel. Neil responds with Pact of Negation. Arthur thinks for a moment, then casts Spell Pierce. The players put their cards in the graveyard. Neil untaps and draws for his turn.

Arthur says, "You didn't pay for Pact."
Neil replies, "You Spell Pierced it."
"No, I Pierced the Peer Through Depths."
(Tournament shortcuts, no penalty)

Closing

- a. How can you use this in your regular events?
- b. Has this changed how you perceived a previous interaction with a head judge?
- c. How can you better communicate your responsibilities to players and other judges when in a HJ role?