

Answering Questions from Players

Salvatore La Terra

What's our mission?

Keep It Fun
Keep It Fair

These objectives sometimes pull us in opposite directions.

We should consider the REL and players' expectations.

Expectations

How official documents see judges

- *Judges will not generally assist players in determining the current game state but can answer questions about the rules, interactions between cards, or the Oracle wordings of relevant cards. [MTR 1.8]*
- *Judges are encouraged to help players in determining free information, but must avoid assisting players with derived information about the game state. [MTR 4.1]*
- *Judges should be seen as a benefit to the players, helping to ensure the consistent and fair running of a tournament. [IPG 1]*

Hands On

Plenty of ways to screw up!

- Some practical cases
- Focus on *possible errors*
- Explore techniques to avoid them

Your Will is my Command

A player who controls an Academy Rector and a Planar Void calls you: “If this guy dies and I stack his ability on top, do I get to fetch an enchantment?”

You answer that he can, he sacrifices the Rector, then his opponent points out he played a Yawgmoth’s Will this turn.

- Don't answer blanket questions or questions on the future
- “What rule interaction is confusing you?”
- Don't tell them you're bad at Magic!

Filthy Rich

A player controls Urborg, Tomb of Yawgmoth and a Filth is in his opponent's graveyard (which gives Swampwalk to his creatures). He points to a creature controlled by his opponent and asks you what happens if it gets blocked.

He's forgetting some effect, but we must not point out the fact to him.

- Don't answer blanket questions or questions on the future
- Don't refer to effects the player hasn't mentioned
- Restate the question you're answering. "If Saprazan Heir and Black Cat trade in combat..."

Scepter on the Wall

A player controls an Isochron Scepter with a Path of Exile imprinted. His opponent control Teferi, Mage of Zhalfir. The first player points at his Scepter and asks you: “Can I use it?”

The answer is that he can activate the Scepter, but what he actually wants to know is if he can cast the copy of Path to Exile.

- Players ask for things they don't know
- We can't coach, but do we really want that Gotcha! moment? He asked us to avoid exactly this mistake.
- “I'm not sure I understood: what do you want to know again?”

Virtual Game State

- A technique to balance perceived fairness and customer service The player defines a set of objects
- - We answer freely with regards to this imaginary game
- - Make clear that our answer stands in the context of the virtual game
- After we give our ruling, we wait for the player to actually make his play, to make sure it is handled correctly and explain what happens in detail

More Examples

- A player shows you a Doom Blade, points to his opponent's Blightsteel Colossus and asks you: "Can I play this?"
- A player controls an Imperious Perfect and a Chamaleon Colossus with a Lignify and a Runed Stalactite attached to it. He calls you and tells you: "We have no clue how big this is."
- A player is attacking with an Inkfathom Witch and some other creatures. Before his opponent has declared blockers, he points to the Witch and asks you: "Can I activate its ability now?"
- A player controls a Baneslayer Angel and a Honor of the Pure. He activates Elspeth, Knight-Errant to give his Angel +3/+3 and attacks with it. His opponent plays Diminish on the Angel, the first player asks you what are its power and toughness now.