

Magic: The Gathering pro uses win to show Hong Kong protest support

Enlarge / Lee Shi Tian pumps his fist during an interview in which he highlighted the ongoing protests in his native Hong Kong.

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Magic: The Gathering pro Lee Shi Tian used a major win at this weekend's Mythic Championship V event in Long Beach, California, as a chance to call attention to protesters in his native Hong Kong.

"Life has been very tough in my hometown in Hong Kong," Lee said in an emotional, livestreamed post-match interview after reaching the Top 8 in the digital *Magic: The Gathering Arena* event. "It feels so good to play as a free man" he added later.

Lee wore a dark red scarf as a mask over the lower half of his face during the match and interview, because "we wear [masks like that] when we go on the street," as he told *Magic* site Hipsters of the Coast. Lee also covered one eye during his entrance to the tournament, an apparent show of support for a nurse who was hit in the eye with a beanbag during a recent protest in Kowloon.

While a recent *Hearthstone* tournament quickly cut away from a

similar on-stream show of support for Hong Kong protesters, the Mythic Championship broadcast didn't edit Lee's statements or stop him short in any way. And while Blizzard quickly punished Ng "Blitzchung" Wai Chung for similar statements after a *Hearthstone* tournament win earlier this month, there has thus far been no indication from *Magic* owner Wizards of the Coast that Lee will receive any official sanction for his statement (a representative for Wizards of the Coast was not immediately available to respond to a request for comment from Ars).

To the contrary, *Magic* esports Twitch chat moderator Ian Dixon noted on Twitter that "mods actually had instructions to *allow and not touch* any and all of those kinds of mentions of [Hong Kong]." That forms a stark contrast to the situation in *Hearthstone* tournaments, where Blizzard has recently started handing out 24 hour suspensions to Twitch chatters that express support for Hong Kong during matches.

Blizzard said earlier this month that "the official broadcast needs to be about the tournament and to be a place where all are welcome... we want to keep the official channels focused on the game." But that was before a bipartisan group of US lawmakers sent a letter urging Blizzard to reconsider their stance, expressing worry about "the Chinese government's growing appetite for pressuring American businesses to help stifle free speech."

Blizzard also recently cancelled a planned promotional event at the Nintendo World NYC store and faces planned protests at next month's Blizzcon fan gathering over its stance on this issue.

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