

# SCF'S COLLECTORS CORNER

OCTOBER 2009

- Inside: - Interview with Panini  
- Product Reviews  
- Overseas Report

**AN INTERVIEW WITH...**

**PANINI**



**Who to watch  
this season**





# TRISTAR Commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the 1909 Obak Minor League Baseball Cards



**FEATURED PLAYER CARDS INCLUDE:**  
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 NOLAN RYAN  
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 & MANY MORE OF HISTORY'S GREATEST!

# Obak

TRISTAR



**PREMIERE EDITION**  
 1909 T-212 OBAK DESIGN

Orders Due: 8/7/09  
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 Case Item Code: 10020440  
 • 6 Cards Per Pack  
 • 20 Packs Per Box  
 • 24 Boxes Per Master Case  
 • 2 12-Box Mini Cases Per Master Case  
 • \$4.99 MSR Per Pack  
**All Boxes & Cases Individually Numbered! Only 150 Cases!**

TRISTAR Obak™ pays tribute to the one of the largest Minor League card sets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with cards featuring the top Minor League players of yesterday and today and a look at the exciting, rich history of Minor League Baseball.

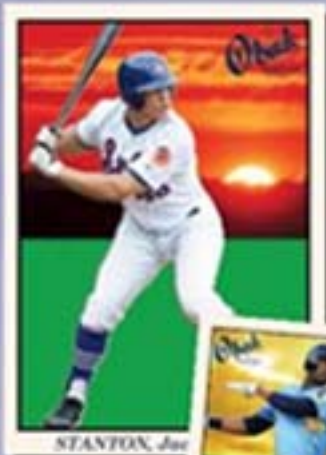
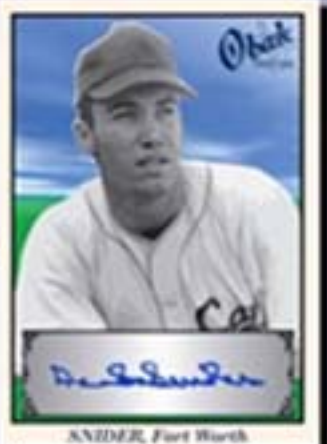
## GUARANTEED PER HOBBY BOX NINE HITS!

- 2 Autograph Cards: 1 Current Player, 1 Retired Player (1 Autograph Card Numbered to 50 or Less)
- 2 Parallel Cards Numbered to 50 or Less
- 1 T-212 Mini Parallel Card Numbered to 50 or Less
- 3 Short Print Cards
- 1 Special 4-Card T-212 Mini Uncut Strip: Numbered to 3,600

6 Officially Licensed Cards Per Pack • 5 Modern Size & 1 T-212 Mini Size  
 20 T-212 Mini Cards Per Box

### AUTOGRAPH CARDS

Legends include Duke Snider, Tom Seaver, Brooks Robinson, Dale Murphy, Jim Rice.  
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 All autograph cards are numbered to 200 or less.



**FEATURED PLAYER CARDS INCLUDE:**  
 MIKE STANTON  
 JASON HEYWARD  
 JUSTIN SMOAK  
 BUSTER POSEY  
 & MANY MORE TOP RISING STARS!



CARD BACKS & PARALLELS

### PARALLEL CARDS COLOR PARALLELS

TRISTAR Obak™ card fronts & backs will be printed in alternate ink colors!

- PURPLE 1/1      GREEN 1/25
- RED 1/5      BLACK 1/50

### 1910 & 1911 BACK VARIATIONS

Select players will have modern size and/or T-212 mini size parallel cards showcasing variations of the 1910 & 1911 Original Obak card backs.

### LOOK FOR IMAGE VARIATIONS!

### CUT SIGNATURE CARDS Look for Randomly-Inserted 1 of 1 Autograph Cards



Plus...Barack Obama, Bing Crosby, Ted Williams, Stan Musial, Sammy Bough & More!



**TRISTAR**

[WWW.TRISTAROBAK.COM](http://WWW.TRISTAROBAK.COM)



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**WELCOME TO OUR NEW  
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## About Time!

**By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888**

As most of you will know, I am first and foremost a hockey fan and collector so this time of the year truly fills me with joy. Summer is over, the training camps are history as well and it is now back to business as usual for the National Hockey League. This also means that the hobby hockey release will soon start hitting us regularly. Regular matches and releases, what more can a fan ask for? I'm officially in heaven.

The NHL fans are not the only ones beaming these days though, the off-season is also coming to a close for those of us who are NBA addicts and all signs point to a very exciting hobby season for the basketball fans. This will be Panini's first year as the sole producer of NBA licenced cards and many are curious to see what kind of product they will be putting out. Given the anticipation surrounding the major change in the basketball hobby portrait, we thought we would give our members a chance to ask Panini some questions. To see what our members wanted to know and what Panini had to say to them, go to page five. All being well, next month we will also have an interview with Tyler Hansbrough, which was arranged by our friends at Panini.

Just days before the release of this edition if Collectors' Corner, Panini announced an exclusive agreement with a player who is arguably the most popular on the planet; Kobe Bryant. For more details on that earth-shattering announcement, turn to page nine.

Our next issue will also include an article from Andrew Long Mr. Packs to the People who will tell us about his experience at the Upper Deck's NHL Rookie photo shoot. He wrote a short preview for us and you can read it on page 46. Furthermore, next month will also include a product review of the much anticipated Panini Prestige Basketball as well as one of Absolute Memorabilia Football. With all those release hitting us in October, expect the boards to be buzzing with box breaks and trade negotiations!

On the Baseball front, it's almost time for the boys of summer to start their off-season but before they do, they will no doubt offer us a memorable post-season! May the best team win and may the best man/woman win the box of TriStar Obak up for grabs in our World Series contest!

One last thing, who do you think pulled the awesome card below? To find out, turn to page 35.



OCTOBER 2009



## A Word with Panini

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

As the Basketball season is almost upon us, SCF's magazine thought it would be a great idea to give its members the chance to ask Panini, now the sole company licensed to produce NBA cards, a few questions. We are grateful to Scott Prusha from Panini for taking the time to chat with us.

**SCF:** One of our members' main concern is the fact that many star players have an exclusive agreement with Upper Deck, they currently hold the rights to Michael Jordan, LeBron James, Julius Irving and Kevin Garnett to name a few. How does Panini expect to satisfy the collectors' appetite for high profile athletes in future releases? Point Blank – Does Panini have any intention to sign these superstars?



**Panini:** As the official trading card manufacturer of the NBA, our goal is to work with all NBA players, past and present. When it comes to high profile athletes, there's no bigger name than Kobe Bryant...and he's exclusively with Panini. He's excited about working with us and wants to contribute, so we are going to focus on working with Kobe for now.

Our industry puts a lot of emphasis on rookie cards, so having the #1 overall pick in the draft, Blake Griffin, gives us another high profile collectible name. Add rookies Hasheem Thabeet, Tyreke Evans, Brandon Jennings, Jordan Hill and Tyler Hansbrough with hall of famers Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Bill Russell and we feel we have some pretty big names to build around.

**SCF:** Another source of worry expressed by our collectors is customer service. Will you guys be helpful and reliable when there's a problem?

**Panini:** We pride ourselves on our customer service department and will continue to not only listen, but also react. We want to make the process as smooth as possible for collectors.

**SCF:** What is your return/replacement policy on damaged cards straight out of the pack/box?

**Panini:** The pertinent information can be found on our website: [www.paniniamerica.net](http://www.paniniamerica.net).

**SCF:** Here are extracts from their website regarding related questions:

Do you replace factory damaged cards?

Panini America is able to replace factory-damaged cards on a card-for-card basis. A request for replacement can be made up to 12 months after product release. We are unable to replace packs, boxes,



cases, sample cards, promotional cards, "Recollection" cards, "No Purchase Necessary" cards and cards containing trapped autographs.

How do you replace a factory damaged sequentially numbered card?

Damaged sequentially numbered cards are replaced if an identical replacement card is available. The serial number is re-stamped on the identical replacement card and the damaged card is destroyed to ensure that there is the stated number of cards on the market.

How long does it take to receive my replacement card?

In most cases, turnaround time is 8 to 10 weeks. For sequentially numbered cards, please allow 10 to 12 weeks for the renumbering process. If the specified card is not available to replace we will send a comparable card of equal value in its place.

How do I get my factory-damaged card replaced?

Before sending your damaged card(s) to us, you will need to submit a replacement request online. After submitting your request, you will be provided with a ticket number and packing slip. The packing slip will need to be printed and included with your card(s) when you mail them.

**SCF:** Currently collectors are a bit unsure of the type of products you will be putting out there, what will be your focus? Will it be hits (game-used, autographs) or inserts (as it seems to be in your recent information releases)? What about printing plates?

**Panini:** Our goal and focus will be value in the box. If you work hard at it, you can find the right combination of memorabilia and autographs that create that value.

**SCF:** I am sure our members will be glad to hear this in the hard economic times we are all currently facing but they would also like to know if Panini is going to create a "higher-end" release similar to Upper Deck Exquisite with on-card autos and patches. Many collectors are infatuated with jumbo patches and on-card autos, like the dual and triple autos and are you capable of creating a product like this? Since the NBA has decided to go with only one company Basketball collectors will be looking to Panini for a similar product that could include LOGOMAN type cards etc. Are there any plans for something like this?



**Panini:** Our plan is to produce trading card products at every level, including high-end. We have a stable of great product names to choose from including Prime Cuts, National Treasures and Timeless Treasures; so collectors can feel confident they will see some of these (and more) in our NBA calendar. Also, adding Kobe is going to allow us to offer collectors value at the higher price points.

**SCF:** Other companies have saturated the market with excessive inventory before their NBA license expires. How, if at all, has it af-





ected product lines this year?

**Panini:** It doesn't change the fact that we are excited to be entering the NBA market and our goal will be to deliver the best products we can - with the goal of providing value per box.

**SCF:** Will there be retail and hobby versions, like there is with current products? If so, will there be blaster boxes in addition to retail boxes? What will the odds of pulling inserts/game-used/autographs be - similar to the 1:10,000 like the odds are today, or will there be a more realistic chance of pulling something like that?

**Panini:** We will continue to offer collectors both hobby and retail version of our products. We are currently evaluating what products will have each and which ones will be hobby exclusive. It's on an ongoing process, so stay tuned...

**SCF:** Do you have any "outside the box" or unique ideas/plans that they can share yet? I'm thinking along the lines of Exquisite hot boxes with autos, TriStar's Obak with serial-numbered boxes, 09 SPx Football "shadow box" cards, and so on...

**Panini:** Donruss was and Panini will be the industry trendsetter, you can bet that what's next will be found in our products!

**SCF:** When the NBA granted Panini the exclusive license, did they set certain minimums as to how many products needed to be released in the year?

**Panini:** This is something we will work together on to find the right balance between what the market can handle...



**SCF:** Will your products be sold worldwide? That will have major influence on set collectors, because the cards will be all over the world instead of concentrated in the North-American market.

**Panini:** Yes, starting with the NBA (being such a global sport), we will see what interest the rest of the world has in our trading cards. Having the world's most popular player doesn't hurt either...

**SCF:** One of the burning debates in the hobby



these days is sticker vs. on-card autographs, where do you stand on that?

**Panini:** As manufacturers ask for more and more of professional athlete's time and with the cost of autographs continuing to climb at a rapid rate due to that time commitment – alternative ways had to be created to deliver collectors the top names, while keeping redemptions to a minimum.

As you can see with our first basketball launch, as well the industry's most popular football launch (Playoff Contenders), Panini is including more and more on-card signatures within our products. We evaluated our deal with Kobe Bryant and felt that the added value is there for on-card autographs, so our goal is to deliver all on-card autographs during the term of that agreement.

Panini came in and listened to collectors, as you can see by the increase in on-card autographs starting with Prestige. We feel that our wide array of non-sticker autographs helps give our products that added value, but our goal is to incorporate as many on-card autographs into our programs as we can, without passing that cost onto the collector.

**SCF:** Another cause of concern for collectors these days is the increase amount of counterfeit patches, autographs and inscriptions. The problem just seems to be getting worse with every release, what steps are being taken by Panini to prevent this?

**Panini:** When Panini began looking at Donruss, one of the areas of interest to them was Donruss' anti-counterfeiting technology. Donruss, together with Kodak, developed the industry's first anti-counterfeiting solution for memorabilia cards. The traceless solution is applied and detectible only by a special reader. This has really made an impact on the counterfeiting of our cards and the plan is to use this for all our releases – including basketball, as well as any additional products we plan to make in the future that would benefit from this technology.

**SCF:** We would like to know a bit about your distribution plan. Any chance of buying direct from Panini?

**Panini:** We have taken over the Donruss distribution model, so the same hobby shops have a chance to buy from us direct. We also use some of the same distributors, so we will be able to get our product just about anywhere.

**SCF:** Finally, will Panini be looking to produce WNBA cards as well?

**Panini:** Not at this time

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questions Scott, we look forward to the upcoming Panini releases!





## Kobe Bryant Signs an Exclusive Contract with Panini

By Matt MacNabb aka ISO NJ 30 G

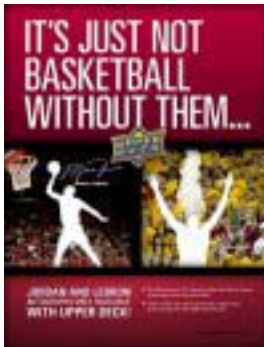


The hobby's biggest recent shake-up was announced not by one of the traditional collecting publications, or by a hobby insider, or one of the countless card collecting blogs known to break hobby news. Rather, it was revealed by Darren Rovell, CNBC's sports business reporter via his Twitter account on the morning of September 29 that Kobe Bryant had signed an exclusive deal with Panini for autograph and memorabilia cards.

Rovell's tweet, which started, "Kobe signing exclusive memorabilia/auto deal w/Panini, leaving Upper Deck," was a spark for all hobby news sources on one of the busiest

days in the hobby community online since Panini was granted an exclusive license to produce NBA trading cards.

Soon after, collectors had information from all sides. Upper Deck posted updates on their Facebook page, the first of which – "Upper Deck would like to wish Kobe Bryant all the best on and off the court in the future. We have a signing scheduled with him shortly to handle outstanding redemption cards. Look for his last UD cards in 09/10 NBA Exquisite releasing tomorrow." – was posted on the Beckett Media blog moments later.



About an hour later, Upper Deck followed up with a post showing that the Kobe-Panini deal was only a surprise to the general public. This statement – "We would like to remind collectors that Upper Deck is STILL the exclusive home for autographs of LeBron James and Michael Jordan. Look for new autograph cards of these two superstars in future Upper Deck products. And remember, it's just not Basketball without them." – appeared with the accompanying image (on the left).

But, clearly, Panini knew this announcement was coming for quite some time, and seemed to time the news just one week ahead of its first basketball release, Panini Prestige. Kudos to them for doing a great job of keeping the Kobe deal under wraps as long as they did.

Panini issued its first statement on the exclusive through Beckett. "Kobe is going to be the face of Panini basketball and help to get kids excited about NBA trading cards," said Panini Group Licensing Director Peter Warsop. "He will serve as the greatest of ambassadors for Panini basketball products around the world. We couldn't be more proud to be associated with one of the most spectacular and transcendent athletes on the planet."

Beckett's post of Panini's first comments also said something to perk up collectors: "He (Kobe) also



will appear on Panini's packaging for future NBA trading card releases and within advertising with future television and radio commercials planned."

The Upper Deck post regarding LeBron and Jordan registered with a number of bloggers, as Wax Heaven, Sports Cards Uncensored, Voice of the Collector and many more shared their insights on the announcement, both on their blogs and through their Twitter accounts.

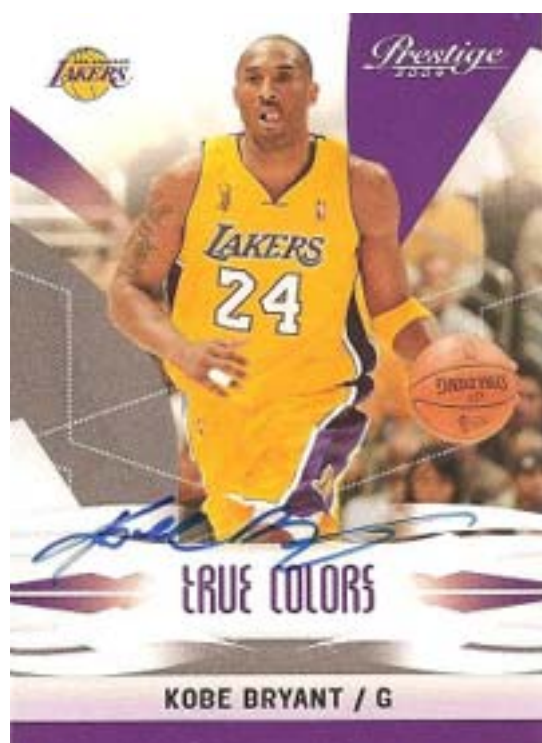
At the same time, the message boards lit up with collectors' opinions running the gamut, from excitement for Panini, concern for Panini, concern for Upper Deck, fond memories for the Kobe cards in Upper Deck products through the year, and everything in between.

The thread on Sports Card Forum, "Kobe says hello to Panini," received 22 replies to the original post before 3:00 pm eastern time (about 8 hours after Rovell's initial announcement, and five and a half hours after the story appeared on CNBC.com).

Collectors on Sports Card Forum lauded the move by Panini, and praised the fact that the early product images releases post-Kobe announcement appeared to contain on-card autographs.

"Awesome acquisition for Panini!" one collector said. "I hope other major NBA stars follow suit and sign a deal with Panini to continue growth with the company in basketball cards, as well as provide star power for collectability."

Soon after Panini was granted an exclusive license in January to produce NBA cards, they caused a stir when they announced exclusive contracts with top NBA Draft pick Blake Griffin, as well as Tyler



Hansbrough, Brandon Jennings and two others. Collectors weren't quite sure what to make of the exclusive signings, as Panini was the only company licensed to produce NBA cards, beginning in October 2009 and continuing indefinitely. But, both Topps and Upper Deck announced the release of a handful of 09-10 products, which would lack signed cards from five of the season's top rookies.

So while the announcement that Kobe will be under an exclusive contract with Panini might seem only to benefit Panini and collectors, it is a hit on Upper Deck, which has previously said it would continue to produce cards that collectors will find desirable. Presumably, those cards would have included Kobe Bryant autograph and memorabilia cards.

Another Sports Card Forum member posted, "This is great news for Panini who hasn't had the smoothest transition yet with UD & Topps releasing all of these 09-10 cards already."





In an exclusive interview with Rovell that aired on CNBC and was posted about an hour later on CNBC.com, Kobe said about the Panini deal, “It’s just a great relationship. We share the same vision and passion for trading cards. As a kid, you know, you collected so many different cards and so forth. They have so much energy and passion they’re kind of pumping that new energy into the business. We share that same goal.”

Rovell also asked Kobe about energizing the hobby, which Rovell said, “when we were kids ... was much bigger than it is today. Two, three times as big.”

Kobe’s reply should be a great sign for collectors of any kind.

“From a business perspective that’s the start,” Kobe said of his exclusive partnership with Panini. “You have to create that emotional connection with the youth because there are so many options out there for kids nowadays. You have to create that connection with them, that experience, they want to be a part of something. I think that’s how you do it.”

Later in the day, Upper Deck posted another message to their Facebook account, “As we say good-bye to Kobe, we’d like you to post your favorite Upper Deck Kobe Bryant card here on our wall. People who post between now and tomorrow will be entered to win different 1/1 LeBron James printing plates. We have three plates, so post pictures of your card now!!” The response from collectors was quick and impressive, with four Kobe card posts in the first hour (in the middle of the work day). While a good amount of information came out soon after the Kobe-Panini announcement, a few questions surely are outstanding in collectors’ minds:

- What will the Kobe exclusive, the other player exclusive contracts and the exclusive card license with the NBA mean for the price points of Panini’s products?
- Will Panini now have the stable to produce a high-end set, comparable to Exquisite (or even Ultimate or UD Black)?
- Who else will remain with Upper Deck (Michael Jordan, LeBron James, Kevin Garnett, Kevin Durant) in the wake of Kobe’s departure?



WE HAVE KOBE.

**PANINI**

ONLY IN 2009-10 NBA TRADING CARDS





## How to be a Smart Trader (aka How to Win disputes)

**By Duane Williams aka duane1969**

Lately there has been a rash of really bad decisions and really upset people because of their bad decisions. To that end I thought it might be a good idea to create a little "guide" on how to be a smart trader (and win disputes). These are the most common reasons that result in losing a dispute.

### **Keep Your Receipt!!**

This is probably the single greatest "mistake" that I see. Something as simple as holding on to a postal receipt can mean the difference between winning and losing a dispute. By simply slipping it into your wallet or purse or putting it some place safe you can protect yourself from being expected to send something more if someone claims that they never received anything. Personally, I have a little box that my bank checks came in sitting behind the computer monitor on my desk. When I get home from the post office I drop the receipt in the box. If later someone claims that they never received what I sent all I have to do is pull the receipt out of the box and scan it and Voila!! I have proof that I shipped.

For those of you that are wondering why I say keep your receipt and am not mentioning a Delivery Confirmation slip, the Dispute Team will accept a scan of a receipt as proof of shipping. So keep your receipt!!!

### **Safe Packaging Is A Must**

This seems like a no-brainer but you wouldn't believe the number of disputes that I see where someone didn't put an extra 10 seconds of effort into safe shipping and they end up having to replace a damaged card.

### **A few tips for safer packaging:**

- \* Don't use PWE. If you and your trade partner agree to use PWE then that is fine but you should be aware that you will be expected to replace cards that are damaged due to shipping in PWE.
- \* Tape the toploader shut. Packages get tossed around during shipping and cards slide out of toploaders and get bent and dinged in the package. By simply putting a piece of tape across the top of the toploader you can prevent this.
- \* Use extra padding. You can buy a roll of bubble wrap at WalMart for about \$3 or you can reuse old padded envelopes to add a little extra padding to those hi-end cards and guarantee that they are safe from rough handling by the USPS workers.

### **Make MSF Traders Send First!!**

Lately there has been an unbelievable amount of disputes in which veteran traders sent first/at the same time to Under 20 MSF traders and they get nothing in return. Let me say this as clearly as I can. If you ignore the MSF tag and send first anyway, YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN.

This may seem harsh but it is SCF policy. We put the MSF tag there to protect you. If you ignore it and send first anyway then you did it to yourself and you are on your own. We will not spend our time working to fix a problem that would not even exist if you had taken our advice and complied with the MSF tag to begin with. I feel safe in saying that at least 90% of the scamming that happens on this site is done by Under 20 MSF traders. Protect yourself, make them send first!!!

Good luck in your trades and feel free to PM me anytime you have a question or concern.





**2009/10 ITG 1972 The Year In Hockey**  
**By Tony Joyce aka Enigma**

First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at In The Game for providing us with this box.

**Box Details**

18 packs per box  
 9 cards per pack  
 Current Retail Price: \$84.99 - \$94.99



**Content Highlights** (insert ratios are based on the entire production run and are not guaranteed in any individual box or case)

- 1 Authentic Game-Used Memorabilia Card Per 18 Packs
- 1 Autograph Card Per 6 Packs!
- 1 Non-Memorabilia Insert Card In Every 8 Packs

**What we Pulled**

**Video:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSKfTxVkWP0>

Base (137/200) - 68.5%

Dupes - 0

Blank Backs (2) - Ken Hodge, Gerry Pinder (Only 72 copies of each exist)

He Shoots He Scores Point Cards (17)



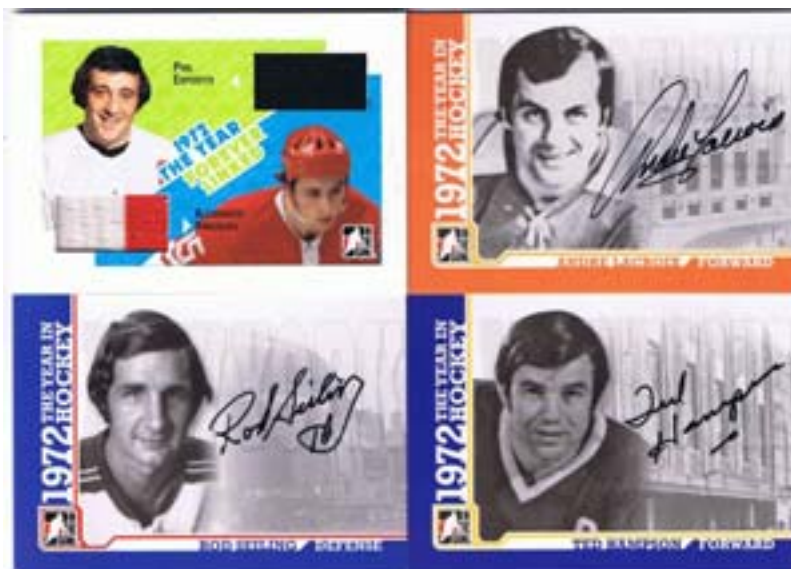


Coaches (1) - Al Arbour  
 Great Moments of 1972 (1) - Bobby Hull Signs With Jets



Forever Linked Phil Esposito 1-color/  
 Alexander Yakushev 2-color Dual Jersey

Andre Lacroix Autograph  
 Rod Seiling Autograph  
 Ted Hampson Autograph



**Final Ratings (Out of 5):**

Base set: 4.25/5  
 Fun: 4/5  
 Overall design: 4.5/5  
 Value: 4.5/5  
 Re-buy: 4.25/5

Overall: 21.5/25 (86%)

In The Game begins the 2009/10 hockey season in an innovative way. 1972 The Year In Hockey is the finished product of a brainchild that started months ago. A few months back, In The Game ran a poll on their site in regards to creating a set dedicated to a specific year. Out of the years you could vote for (which included 1980), 1972 received the most votes. And now, In The Game honors their card collecting public with 1972 The Year In Hockey.

The base cards are simplistic in design, but that's not a bad thing. The player photos are encapsulated





in an ellipse with their team name at the top and the year, name and position at the bottom. The team name and year is done in a bubble design which is eye-catching and will appeal to a younger generation. The card backs are done in one of four colors. There is a quick tidbit about the player as well. Cards 151-189 are used to showcase the individual players from the 1972 Summit Series between Canada and the USSR. Cards 190-198 feature information from each game as well as the MVP from each team. The set closes with two checklists.

The He Shoots He Scores program can be found in this release. As hockey collectors know, the HSHS program is normally found in Heroes & Prospects and Between The Pipes. The idea behind the redemption program is to acquire a certain amount of points (for this release, it is 200) and send them in to In The Game. In return, you will receive a limited edition card (usually numbered to 20) that revolves around this set. The cards will be memorabilia, auto, or both in nature. To enhance the 1972 theme, each HSHS card has a small tidbit about an event that occurred during the month printed on it.

There are five insert sets in this release, but you will only find two cards total in each box on average. This allows them to be some great chase sets. The Forever Linked series is wonderful as it features two players that through some sort of event will always be paired together throughout hockey history. As Between The Pipes fans can tell you, Masked Men is dedicated to the goalies of the league. Coaches and Rookies are quite obvious. Finally, Great Moments of 1972 features important events of the year and encapsulates the featured person with the TV screen background.

The heart of this release is the Autograph and Memorabilia program. On average, each box will yield three autographs and one memorabilia card. And the huge plus is the autographs are hard signed. No need to worry about tacky or misplaced stickers nor incomplete autographs due to the signers running out of room. With three versions of each card, collectors will have fun running down the cards of their favorite players.

All in all, 1972 The Year In Hockey delivers with a bang. Allowing consumers and fans to decide on a product shows how In The Game listens to the collectors. This is a great way to start the hockey collecting season. For the price point, this release scores a hat trick. With four autographs or memorabilia cards (with the autographs hard signed), the set may be about 1972, but 2009 may be remembered as The Year In Hockey for collectors.

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at In The Game for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on this product or others, check ITG out today at [www.itgtradingcards.com](http://www.itgtradingcards.com).



**2009 Donruss Threads Football**  
**By Tony Joyce aka Enigma**

First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at Panini America for providing us with this box.

**Box Details**

24 packs per box

5 cards per box

Current Retail Price: 79.99 - 89.99

**Program Highlights**



Rookie class featuring signed on-card name plates of names such as:  
 Matthew Stafford, Mark Sanchez, Josh Freeman, Pat White, Knowshon Moreno, Donald Brown,  
 Chris Wells, LeSean McCoy, Shonn Greene, Darrius Heyward-Bey, Michael Crabtree, Jeremy  
 Maclin, Percy Harvin, Hakeem Nicks, Kenny Britt

College gridiron kings featuring:  
 Mathew Stafford, Mark Sanchez, Chris Wells, Derrick Williams, LeSean McCoy, Juaquin Iglesias,  
 Brian Cushing, Rey Mauluga, Tyson Jackson, Jeremy Maclin

College greats featuring signatures of:  
 Bob Lilly, Carl Eller, Ace Parker, Earl Campbell, Hugh McElhenny, Chris Wells, Donald Brown, Jeremy  
 Maclin, Knowshon Moreno, LeSean McCoy, Mark Sanchez, Matthew Stafford, Michael Crabtree, Percy  
 Harvin, Shonn Greene

Century legends featuring:  
 Frank Gifford, Jerry Rice, Jim Brown, Joe Montana,  
 Joe Namath, Paul Hornung, Steve Young, Tommy McDonald

**What we Pulled**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7F3VJMuV94c>

Base (98/100) - 98%

Dupes - 4

Rookies /999 (4) - Aaron Brown, Brian Hartline, David  
 Johnson, Sammie Stroughter





Silver Parallel /250 (3) - Braylon Edwards, LenDale White, Gerald McRath  
 Gold Parallel /50 (1) - Michael Mitchell



Century Legends (2) - Randy White, Paul Hornung  
 Century Stars (1) - Marion Barber III  
 College Greats (2) - Hugh McElhenny, James Casey  
 Generations (1) - Brian Westbrook/Marion Barber III



Pro Gridiron Kings (3) - AJ Hawk, Andre Caldwell, Antoine Cason  
 College Gridiron Kings (3) - Brian Orakpo, Brian Robiskie, James Casey  
 College Gridiron Kings Framed Blue /50 (1) - Brandon Pettigrew  
 Triple Threat (1) - Ben Roethlisberger/Santonio Holmes/Willie Parker







Tom Brady Jersey /250  
Generations Earl Campbell/Chris Johnson Dual Jersey /250

Rookie Class Letterman Aaron Curry "R" Auto /275



**Final Ratings (out of 5):**

Base Set – 4.75

Fun – 4

Overall Design – 5

Value – 3

Rebuy – 3.5

Total – 21.25/25 (85%)

Threads is a solid product again this year. The base cards look amazing with the "X" design in the background. However, a small issue is the collation. Why leave the box 2 cards short of a complete set and insert 4 duplicates? Just doesn't make sense to me. Numerous inserts are contained in this release with Gridiron Kings continuing to be the best of all. As a fan of the framed cards for years, I'm glad to see them return. It would really be great to see them resurface as their own release again. The painted sketches add an intriguing and eye-catching aspect to the cards.

I'm sure others will disagree, but when Letterman cards are numbered into the hundreds, they lose their appeal. When the Letterman cards first came out, they were limited in number and became highly collectible. Nowadays, they have become a dime a dozen. While they are nice to look at and a neat pull, the Letterman cards have turned into a farce, much like all the other types of cards that turned into too much of a good thing.

As previously mentioned, Threads has another strong showing this year. Between the inserts, relics and autos, you can expect to receive an average of almost one per pack over the run of the entire box. In addition, getting virtually all the base cards makes it fairly easy to complete a set with one box. With the card design, this should be a great set for trough the mail and in person autograph seekers as the bottom half of the card is a great signature area...right below the player's name.

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Panini America for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all their products, check them out at [www.paniniamerica.net](http://www.paniniamerica.net).



**2009 Upper Deck UDx Baseball**  
**By Tony Joyce aka Enigma**

First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at Upper Deck for providing us with this box.

**Box Details**

24 packs per box  
 6 cards per pack  
 Current Retail Price: 31.99 - 39.99

**Product Breakdown:**

Regular Cards and Rookies  
 - 100 Regular Cards

Inserts and Parallel Cards

- Regular Card Die Cut Parallel Cards (One per pack, on average)
- UDxponential (This year there are six (6) different levels of exciting Xponential rainbow board inserts!)
- Combine 1 per pack!
- Three (3) 20th Anniversary cards per box, on average!
- Find One Press Plate per case!

Autograph Cards (1 per case, on average)  
 - UDx Signatures

Memorabilia Cards:

- Upper Deck X Jersey Card (One per box)
- 20th Anniversary Memorabilia Cards

**What we Pulled**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtG4sauvGEG>

Base (89/100) - 89%  
 Dupes - 0  
 Die Cut Parallel (24)





- Xponential (8)
- Xponential 2 (5)
- Xponential 3 (4)
- Xponential 4 (3)
- Xponential 5 (2)
- Xponential 6 (1)



20th Anniversary Retrospective (3)



Jermaine Dye Jersey



**Final Ratings (out of 5):**

- Base Set – 4.75
- Fun – 3
- Overall Design – 4
- Value – 1.5
- Rebuy – 2.5
- Total – 16.25/25 (65)





Though some consider this a throwaway product, I must admit that the cards are addictively appealing. The base cards are simplistic in that the background is a big "X", which just happens to be the name of the release. Then the die cuts work in harmony with the base cards and they are cut in an "X" pattern.

As for the Xponential Dimensional Rainbow Foil cards, it took me a little while to realize they were from different sets. I figured it out once I began sorting the cards that the card number on the back indicated the card level. And then, I inspected the front even longer and finally saw the small number on each of the cards. Also, I don't understand why the higher levels aren't serial numbered. Accordingly, why does this set only have 3 of the 20th Anniversary Retrospective cards when other releases with fewer packs have more?

Going into this, I knew this release was really meant for a younger crowd. You can tell as it's a part of the UpperDeckU.com series, where kids can take a code off the inside wrapper and participate in a virtual sports card world. The codes earn them time, which in turn can earn them numerous online amenities only found in this virtual world. I'm always for anything that brings kids into the hobby. So if you have a kid, be sure to look into this.

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Upper Deck for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on their products, you can check them out at [www.upperdeck.com](http://www.upperdeck.com).





**2009/10 Topps Basketball**  
**By Tony Joyce aka Enigma**

First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at Topps for providing us with this box.

**Box Details**

36 packs per box  
 10 card per pack  
 Current Retail Price: 49.99 - 59.99

**Product Highlights:**

- 110 High-Flying Chrome Rookies & Veterans!
- Topps Exclusive McDonald's All-American Signed-On Cards!
- NBA All-Star Game-Worn Multi-Relic Cards!
- NBA Rookie Photo Shoot Signed-On Jersey Letter Patch Cards!

**What we Pulled**

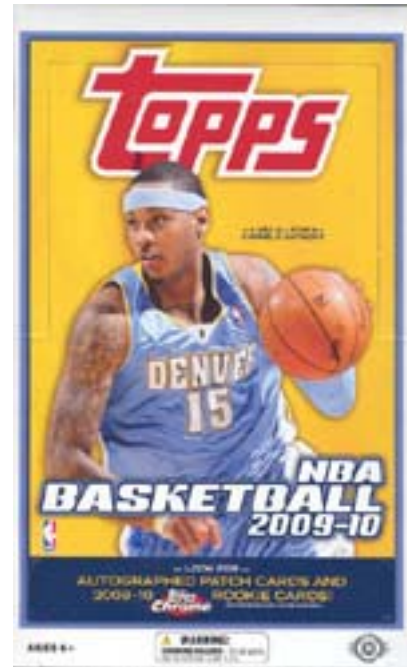
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sIWSKoitwY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znI89OjQkOs>

Base (303/330) - 91.8%  
 Dupes - 0

Topps Gold /2009 (36) - Ronald Murray, Acie Law IV, Rajon Rondo, Brian Scalabrine, John Salmons, Antoine Wright, Tayshaun Prince, Ron Artest, Marc Gasol, Quinton Ross, Joel Anthony, Michael Redd, Charlie Villanueva, Al Jefferson, Sebastian Telfair, Yi Jianlian, Bobby Simmons, Josh Boone, Danilo Gallinari, Jared Jeffries, Earl Watson, Robert Swift, Desmond Mason, Kevin Durant, Hedo Turkoglu, Tyronn Lue, Anthony Johnson, Thaddeus Young, Reggie Evans, Shaquille O'Neal, Matt Barnes, Michael Finley, Kurt Thomas, Roko Ukic, Andray Blatche, Tyreke Evans

Topps Black /50 (1) - Rodney Carney





Chrome /999 (3) - Al Horford, Mo Williams, Troy Murphy  
 Chrome Refractors /500 (2) - Anderson Varejao, Brandon Roy



Draft Snapshot (6) - Dikembe Mutombo, Dwyane Wade, Hakeem Olajuwon, Jason Kidd, Kobe Bryant, Kevin Durant



Championship Material Shaquille O'Neal Jersey

Roundball Remnants Aaron Brooks Jersey  
 Roundball Remnants Andrew Bogut Jersey







**Final Ratings (out of 5)**

Base Set – 4.5  
Fun – 4.75  
Overall Design – 4  
Value – 5  
Rebuy – 5



Total – 23.25/25 (93%)

It may be a "low-end" product, but Topps gets this one right. The base cards look great with the full color action shots of the veteran players. Not only that, in a box that contains this amount of base, to avoid any duplications is amazing and appreciated. And getting over 90% of the base set completed in one box is always a plus.

Outside of one small set, the inserts are all numbered cards. Accordingly, all packs contain one Topps Gold /2009. This is a great bonus for collectors as in years past you only got between 6-8 Gold cards. Furthermore you also receive a second insert in every three packs. It is also really nice to see the Chrome cards as an additional level of parallels.

Typically in the past, a box of Topps would yield one relic or auto. This year, Topps has upped the stakes by having boxes contain at least two relics or autos. This adds so much more enjoyment to opening a box that is usually boring and quite tedious. Though it is not the first time it's been done, it's wonderful to see Topps display the relics in a basketball field instead of a cookie cutter square. This gives more life and appeal to the cards.




I am truly impressed with this effort from Topps. I know part of this is due to the contract expiring soon, but nonetheless, you have to give credit where credit is due. I would love to see this approach carry over to all sports. Decrease production x Additional goodies = Successful product. This is one of the limited few basketball products from Topps that I could see myself simply enjoying opening over and over.

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Topps for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all their products, check them out at [www.topps.com](http://www.topps.com).



Every month, we aim to provide you with an accurate list of release dates, however as you will no doubt know, release dates do change. At the time of publishing, all dates were correct.

**October 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
5    - Triple Threads Baseball	6   - SP Authentic Baseball	7   Prestige Basketball	8	9
12	13   - Black Hockey	14   -Prominent Cuts   Donruss Certified Football	15	16
19	20	21   Legends Racing	22	23
26	27   - Artifacts Hockey - Black Football	28   -Football Collector's Box	29	30

## Hockey's Homecoming By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

With the hockey season almost upon us it is time for the teams at various level to hold their training camps. This year, two teams from the American Hockey League (AHL) decided to try something a little different to kick things off. Both the Hamilton Bulldogs (the Montreal Canadiens' farm team) and the Toronto Marlies (the Toronto Maple Leafs' farm team) accepted the invitation of the Edinburgh Capitals to join them and the Belfast Giants in a newly created four-team tournament; the Gardiner Cup.

For British hockey fans this was very big news and bigger still for a French-Canadian in exile, we rarely get to see this calibre of hockey played on these shores and when the event was confirmed I immediately booked tickets. The four and a half hour train journey from London to Edinburgh seemed like a small price to pay to witness a great hockey gathering. After three months of nervously waiting, it was finally time to head to Scotland last weekend.

The tournament started with an exhibition game between the Marlies and the Bulldogs on the 24th September, which the Dogs won 1-0 but the semi-finals and the final were scheduled for the 26th-27th September.

We made our way to Edinburgh on the Saturday morning and got there in time to witness the Marlies' demolition of the host team, the Edinburgh Capitals by a final score of 6-1. I must admit paid little attention to the first match, I was rather busy admiring all the merchandise on offer and figuring out what to buy as well as doing a little bit of reckon work to assess the locations where autographs opportunities would be more likely. In the end, I bought an official Hamilton Bulldogs jersey (the last one in stock even though it was quite early in the tournament), a commemorative T-shirt of the tournament and of course, the program.

Once the Toronto-Edinburgh match was over, we were told that we needed to return outside of the arena to queue for the second match of the day; Hamilton-Belfast. While my friend waited in line, I walked around the grounds to find the team buses to know where to go to catch the players later in the evening. When I returned to the queue to join my friend she excitedly pointed towards a park by







the Rugby ground where some of the Bulldogs players were warming up for their match! Sharpie and Gardiner Cup T-shirt in hand, I made my way towards the park and was able to get four autographs (Shawn Belle, Andrew Conboy, Frederic St. Denis and Eric Neilson). By that stage, I had decided to attempt to get autographs from players of all four teams and get the Dogs to sign in red, the Marlies in blue, the Giants in green and the Capitals in black. I therefore had four red signatures on my T-shirt already and was very happy with the start of my weekend. I was rather surprised to be the only autograph chaser near the Bulldogs players, I suspect most of the locals didn't really know their players or their team for that matter, I heard a teenager tell his friends the Bulldogs were part of the Amateur Hockey League (fear not I corrected him). The lack of competition for autographs also meant that players had more time to talk to me, for instance Eric Neilson stopped and chatted with me for a good 5 minutes, he was a really nice guy and it really seemed like he took an interest.

We then had the pleasure to witness the Bulldogs' victory over the Giants by a final score of 7-0. This meant that the tournament's final would oppose the Bulldogs and the Marlies, a dream final if there ever was one! After the game, we headed to the marquee by the arena as we had been told that players from all four teams would attend for a drink. However, not many players turned up at all and I only managed to get two more autographs from the Bulldogs players. I was still missing my big targets, P.K. Subban and David Desharnais...I only had one more day to tackle them so to speak and I knew Sunday would be a busy day...

On the last day of the tournament we came to the arena to watch the Giants-Capitals consolation final in the afternoon. I had noticed on the previous day that both team had one French-Canadian player and I was really hoping to get their autograph especially as one of them was born in my hometown. Between period one and two, I decided to try and make my way to the locker rooms area in the hope of bumping into them. Unfortunately, security had other ideas... as they were blocking my way, the Giants' number 72 Pierre-Luc Faubert walked out of the locker room so I asked him in French if I could get his autograph and he got me through security! I managed to get a few autographs back there. Faubert's was the best I got in this locker room mission though. He ended the game with two of the Giants' six goals. They thoroughly deserved their 6-2 victory, which put an end to a disappointing weekend for the local team and fans.

With that, the table was set for the tournament final and it was once again time to go queue outside the arena. When we got out, I noticed that only one of the North-American teams' buses was there. Leaving my friend to wait in line, I headed over to the sole team bus and was chuffed to realize that only the Marlies had arrived. This meant that if I waited near the other bus parking space I would be able to see



all of the Bulldogs arrive! I only had to wait for 10 minutes before their vehicle turned into the parking lot. When the players started to get out of the bus, it was rather tempting to ask all of the ones whose autograph I was missing to sign my T-shirt, but I was determined not to miss this splendid occasion to get P.K. Subban's signature. When he finally got out of the bus, not only did I get his graph on the T-shirt, but I also asked him to sign the Montreal Canadiens shoulder patch of my Bulldogs Jersey and he did! I had managed to get the Canadiens' best prospect to sign my jersey! Needless to say, I felt like my main mission was accomplished and I wouldn't have mind if I failed

to get any other autographs for the rest of the weekend!

Once Subban was done fulfilling my requests, I saw the coach Guy Boucher exit the team bus, I wasn't going to miss the chance to strike a conversation with the one many see as the Habs future coach. He was pleasantly surprised to meet a fellow French-Canadian in Edinburgh and we had a ten-minute chat before he had to go get his team ready for the upcoming final, I told him to go and win us the final and that it would be easy, after all, it was only the Marlies! He said he would do his best but it would be far from easy...

The final was played at a hectic rhythm and I'm happy to report that the Bulldogs thoroughly dominated. The final score was 3-1 Hamilton and the shots on goal were 36 to 20 favouring the Dogs which further demonstrated to what extent the dominated the final showdown. At the end of the game, I met J.T Wyman's parents and his mother took me down behind the players bench where I got her son's and Alex Henry's graphs.



I then proceeded to exit the arena and waited for the Marlies to come out, I managed to get a few of their autographs, they weren't very talkative, having just lost the final but they did still take the time to



sign for me, even though I was still wearing my Bulldogs jersey. About half an hour later, the Bulldogs players started to come out as well and I was able to obtain almost all of their autographs, I got an impressive 19 out of 24 players to sign, including my last big target; David Desharnais! I was still there when the coaching staff got out of the building and I couldn't help but tell the head coach: "Told you it would be easy!" He laughed and we talked a bit more, I asked him if he and the team had enjoyed the experience and he said that they did indeed. He felt such a trip was a great way to get the players to come together as a team and bond more quickly. He further stated that it was nice to start the training camp away from the media spotlight and with no-one waiting to criticize his players after each game. Hopeful, I then asked if he thought possible that they would repeat the experience and he confirmed that they would certainly be interested if invited again!

Overall, this has been an amazing experience for me and I am now looking forward more than ever to the start of the NHL season and perhaps to another Scottish adventure next September. Never say never!





## **For Now, Hope Springs Eternal** **By Richard McAdam aka RGM81**



The kids are safely back to school. Young adults are writing their first papers and exams at college. The leaves are changing colours. There's a little bit of frost on the ground. The sun is setting noticeably earlier. And 30 NHL teams are beginning to get ready for their annual push towards the Stanley Cup.

In cities across North America, NHL training camps are wrapping up this week. Young hopefuls are enduring a test of nerves hoping to make the final roster cuts and live the dream of playing in the greatest professional sports league in the world. Old hands will fight for another crack at glory. Established veterans will show the kids the ropes and what it means to be in the game. On TV, in the newspapers, and across the Internet, hockey-mad fans will lap it all up as they get ready for the 2009-10 season. All of them are asking the same question: will this be the year?

For the time being, every team has an equal chance. Everybody is undefeated. While one team basks in the residual glory of preparing to start the season as the defending Stanley Cup Champions, 29 other teams are hunting them. Many have made significant changes to their rosters in order to improve and bolster their chances once the puck has dropped. Even the champions do a little tinkering in order to ensure that they remain the best after some of their roster departs.

There is no particular formula for success in the NHL - after Anaheim won in 2007, "Brian Burke style hockey" was the pattern other teams tried to emulate: toughness, grit, and a willingness to flirt with the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. But 2008 gave us the Detroit Red Wings, a team with more skill than sandpaper, though they had plenty of the latter. In 2009, in the Finals rematch, the youth and tremendous skill of the Pittsburgh Penguins triumphed over the more experienced Red Wings. Every year, teams adjust to match the perceived formula for success and emulate the previous year's winner. However, much like countries that prepare for future battles in the belief that if they just fight the last war better they will succeed, teams that demonstrate innovation, creativity, and new ways of thinking tend to rise to the top.

Of course there are always constants when it comes to formulating a winning strategy. Elite goaltending, a strong defensive system, a superior plan of attack, sound coaching, and excellently executed special teams are all important qualities a team must possess. None on their own is a necessary and sufficient condition for winning Lord Stanley's Grail; it takes a combination of at least two of the above, often all of them, to become an elite team. But even then, there are elements that can be crucial to a team's success or failure over the course of an 82-game regular season and grueling four-round playoffs.



Intangibles are often the deciding factor between victory and defeat in hockey. A key injury that sidelines a star player can be deflating to a team's morale. The emergence of a young player can contribute to a strong core, making the coaching staff and the veterans comfortable going with anybody on their roster in crucial situations. Off-ice issues can either bring a team together or cause fracture in the dressing room. Even a lucky bounce at a critical time in a game can dramatically alter a team's destiny. A bad call in a game in December that costs a team two points can come back to haunt the team in April, possibly costing them a division title or even a berth in the post-season.

As the long summer winds down, every team and each team's fans have renewed hope that the days ahead will bring victory, success, and glory. Over the coming months, some teams will see their hopes rise and others will inevitably fall depending on what happens on the ice. Parade route plans will be shelved, playoff towels will be printed, fans will abandon the bandwagon and likely jump back on again once things turn around, and we will all marvel at the spectacular highlights and drama that unfold as the season progresses.

But that is for the future. Now, it is all about the anticipation as we await the dropping of the first puck of the 2009-10 season.





## Rookie Cards - The Passion of Hobby Collecting

By Joey Collins aka joecoolio

From the mindset of a young collector, the thrill of opening a pack of hockey cards is indescribable. When you're a kid, you know nothing of boundaries. Personally, I would imagine there were a million cards and every pack I opened would bring forth new and wondrous pictures, teams and players. Every player was a superstar; there was no such thing as a common player. I would always cherish when I pulled a card of a team captain. Every year I would look forward to buying the new season of O-Pee-Chee hockey cards. I remember collecting and separating all my cards into teams with elastics grouping them together, not caring about the value of keeping a pristine card. Plastic holders did not even exist then. No one would imagine that a player's picture on a piece of cardboard would be considered valuable in the future. I can't even imagine how many Mario Lemieux and Wayne Gretzky rookie cards had been creased, ripped and even drawn on (I think everyone drew a mustache on a hockey card at some point in their lives). It was fun and cheap for a young collector. Each pack was only 35 cents.

Something happened in the early 1990s that changed the industry forever. It seems someone woke up one day and decided hockey cards were valuable. Overnight, prices started to skyrocket and companies started producing hockey cards at an alarming rate. Newer companies and products were appearing out of nowhere; it seemed everyone wanted a piece of the hockey card pie. All of a sudden it did not cost 35 cents anymore for a pack. It was now three, four, and five dollars a pack. Even the "cheap" cards were more than a dollar a pack.



As a kid who loved to collect, I relished the idea that my old cards were worth something, but the price of newer cards severely limited my ability to collect. I bought, traded and sold many cards during the excitement of the early 1990s. It seemed to be an industry where everyone was making money. Then, all of a sudden, it seemed to come crashing down. Companies had overproduced many great cards which should be valuable almost 20 years later. The rookies that came out of the early 1990s were unbelievable. Guys like Jaromir Jagr and Martin Brodeur, sure-fire Hall of Famers, have rookie cards that are next to worthless, even for the "premium" products at the time. Many cards people thought were worth big money, now no one wanted. Why? Mainly because we all had the same cards, there was no standard in the industry and it became oversaturated. Greedy companies made big money selling way too many cards to everyone. It seemed the industry soured and everyone turned away. Talk to any guy in their 30s today and chances are they have the entire Upper Deck or Score set from 1990, but quit collecting after that.

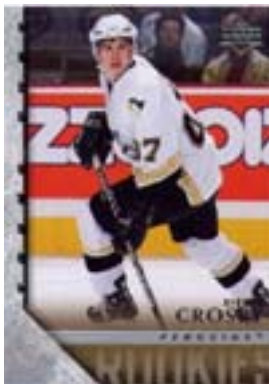
Over the next several years, many card companies went out of business. With people losing their interest in the industry due to oversaturation, companies had no choice but to close up shop. No one wanted regular overpriced cards, or any cards for that matter. It was just these past few years that standards and value have been added back into the industry. Products are now more limited and strict ratios are put on cases and boxes to ensure some control is kept over what is released. Hockey cards are, for the most part, still expensive. But now people have taken collecting to the next level.





Gone are the days of a plain card. Now you can get autographs, game used memorabilia, short prints, parallel variations and all sorts of different kinds of beautiful cards in different products. The thrill of hockey cards seems to have returned for card collectors, although these days it seems more like a lottery ticket or investment than good youthful exuberance.

One thing that has remained constant has been the thrill of pulling the first card of that next great player. This card is affectionately known as the “Rookie Card.” Every product released nowadays has rookie cards in some way or form. Ever since I was a kid, it was exciting to pull that new player every year – the good, young player everyone wanted to have. The rookie card – it’s simple and powerful. Every year there are new batches of young players who enter the NHL searching for greatness. This is the reason I am still an avid collector. Big companies, special cards and products will come and go. The constant is the thrill of pulling that next great player. This still brings the little boy out of me, which is to me the passion of hobby card collecting.





## **I Do Believe this Hobby Is Dying a Slow Death**

**By Stephen Duell aka spuds1961**

I have been a collector seriously now for 15 years; during this time I have shifted my collecting goals many times. When I first started collecting I was primarily a hockey card collector as I lived in New York and this was right after the Rangers won the Stanley Cup. There were lots of brands to buy and a lot of neat inserts and it wasn't that expensive. Right now I live in Mississippi and the two sports I mainly collect are baseball and football, the products are decent if not a little overpriced, this is where I'll end this segment and start on the next.

I only have one card shop within driving distance of where I live and his prices almost double the price of what I can get a box online for. Example; I can get a box of Topps Allen & Ginter online for about 70 dollars after shipping and handling. His prices after taxes? \$115 or so that's a \$45 difference which although I would like to support the brick and mortar guys is too much of a difference. I know that these guys have to pay for their storefront and other things to keep their business going but guess what? I have a family to support also, and buying cards is not high on my wife's list of extra expenses.

A lot of collectors have suggested I buy singles of what I collect from eBay; easier said than done for anybody and everybody who has been sniped at the last second. You will know what I'm talking about...I admit there are deals to be had but there are also a lot more shady sellers than there used to be as witnessed by the number of fake patch and autographed cards out there. With that being said I also admit to having a gamblers mentality and a lot of the thrill for me is the actual opening of packs and not knowing what you might get. I don't mind paying for that thrill but I also don't like the way products have become so watered down with no-name autographs and cheap one color game-used cards.



The reason I say the hobby is dying a slow death is because nobody has a clue as to where it is headed. With baseball going solely to Topps, basketball to Panini and hockey to Upper Deck the only sport out there left with a wide variety will be football. With only one company handling the whole sport they really don't have to care what type of product or at what cost they put out. Competition on the other hand forces creativity and it also keeps prices in check as one company can not charge a heck of a lot more than the other or it will never sell. I also find interest in collecting on the down slope, as I don't see that much fresh blood entering the field. Today's kids have more things offered to them than I ever did, with all the technology and

other things going on in a kid's life it's no wonder cards are really not on their minds. I don't have an answer for the major players in the card industry, but maybe just maybe it's time the product was scaled back to its original beginnings where set building ruled and rookie cards were king and player collectors could actually have every card of their favorite player. Let's as collectors let our voices be heard as to what we want as if the industry chooses not to listen to us well, there will be no more industry. Thanks for the read and here's hoping this industry gets moving in the right direction!



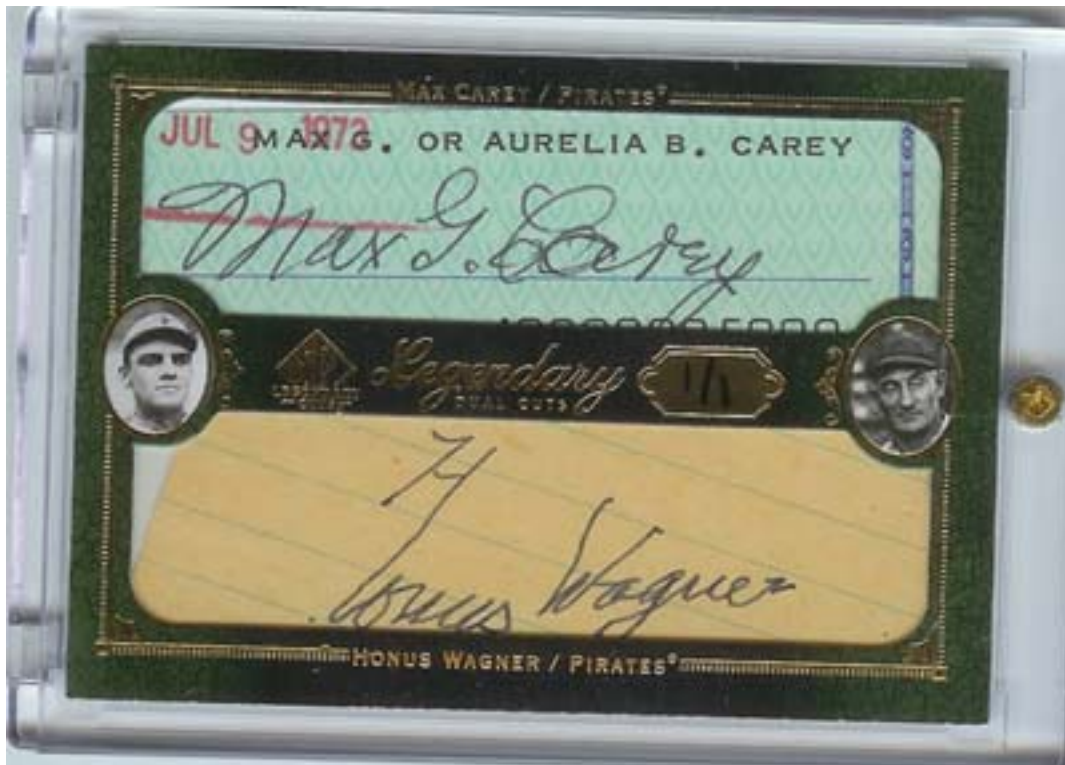
### A Collector's Reward

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888



Let's face it, we are all addicts. Day in and day out we buy packs or boxes of wax in the hope of pulling THE card, that one pull which will justify the fact that you just spent \$200+ on cardboard. All of us, we are all chasing the elusive pull of a lifetime. Of course, it's a pull of a lifetime so it's all in the name, it doesn't happen that often but when it does the feeling you get is as sweet as anything. A euphoria that can last for a few days if not a few weeks! Problem is, chances are if you share it with your family and friends they will probably stare at you like you are a demented geek...There is however one place where you can always show off and discuss the monumental pulls; Sportscardforum!

A few days ago, one of our baseball staffer did just that. Donald Sturm (stewart20rulz) is one of the advisors on the baseball team and on the 29th September he visited his local card shop in North Charleston South Carolina for what he thought would be another standard wax purchase...how wrong he was. Having had good luck in the last week with a box of Ticket to Stardom he was browsing on the discount shelf when he saw in the corner of his eye a discounted box of Legendary Cuts. He bought the box and little did he know opening pack six would forever cement his collecting legacy, it revealed a dual cut autograph of Max Carey and Honus Wagner, THE Wagner of the best known baseball card in the world! For full detail of his pull, check out this thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=916389>. Join me on congratulating Donald on what truly is, the pull of a lifetime!







## Basketball Happenings

**By Trevor Picone aka trevor21 and Nathan Loewy aka garnett\_21**

With the NBA off-season coming to a close, and NBA training camps opening over the last few days, we haven't seen many free-agent signings, or any significant trades over the last month. However, there was one signing of note - the NBA's 5th highest scoring average leader of all time found a new team - Allen Iverson signed a one-year contract with the Memphis Grizzlies, for approximately \$3.5 million. He will most likely become the starting point guard for the Grizzlies, moving former starter Michael Conley back to the bench.

With the NBA season quickly approaching, you should be sure to keep an eye out on the Basketball Contests forum for season-long contests that are set to begin in late October! There will be card prizes for the top spots in each contest at the end of the season. Don't miss out!

Be sure to check out the Panini interview in this magazine, with questions asked by the wonderful members of SCF! Also, be sure to read the November issue of this magazine, as we will have questions answered by NBA rookie Tyler Hansbrough. You won't want to miss that!

The 2009 Theme Weeks are still going strong! We only have about 10 weeks left in this years edition, so be sure to visit the Basketball Show and Tell forum to get in on the action!

Winners for each week of the year, as of September 27th, are:

week 1: lc\_chatser, bob9826

week 2: BRoy#7

week 3: TeamADG

week 4: jeebus86

week 5: XxViSiOnxX

week 6: whalechaser

week 7: nbacardDOTnet

week 8: BRoy#7

week 9: Verse1

week 10: VintageHeros

week 11: drtom2005, MatthewLee

week 12: jeebus86

week 13: sl7in

week 14: crizr

week 15: OJMayo32

week 16: VintageHeros, kardkid74

week 17: xdrew

week 18: crizr

week 19: Seahawkz37

week 20: XxViSiOnxX

week 21: andreamjohnson

week 22: eddiejr

week 23: ponyboy

week 24: nissandriver77

week 25: tmacdirkbaron

week 26: MatthewLee

week 27: t-macdirkbaron, Ojmayo32

week 28: realreodeal, crizr

On behalf of the SCF Basketball Team, we'd like to welcome Mitch (tutall) to the team! Mitch has been a moderator on SCF for some time now, but just recently joined the basketball team as an advisor. So, please give him a warm welcome!

The basketball team has also decided to create a new forum! Under Basketball Chat, you will find a forum titled "Fantasy Basketball Chat", made for anything relating to fantasy basketball! In this forum, you will find a thread dedicated to the official SCF fantasy basketball league, in which participants will be competing for card prizes! Those prizes have yet to be announced, but they will be good! Be sure to check it out and read the posts, and help out with giving fellow members advice on their fantasy rosters or potential trades!



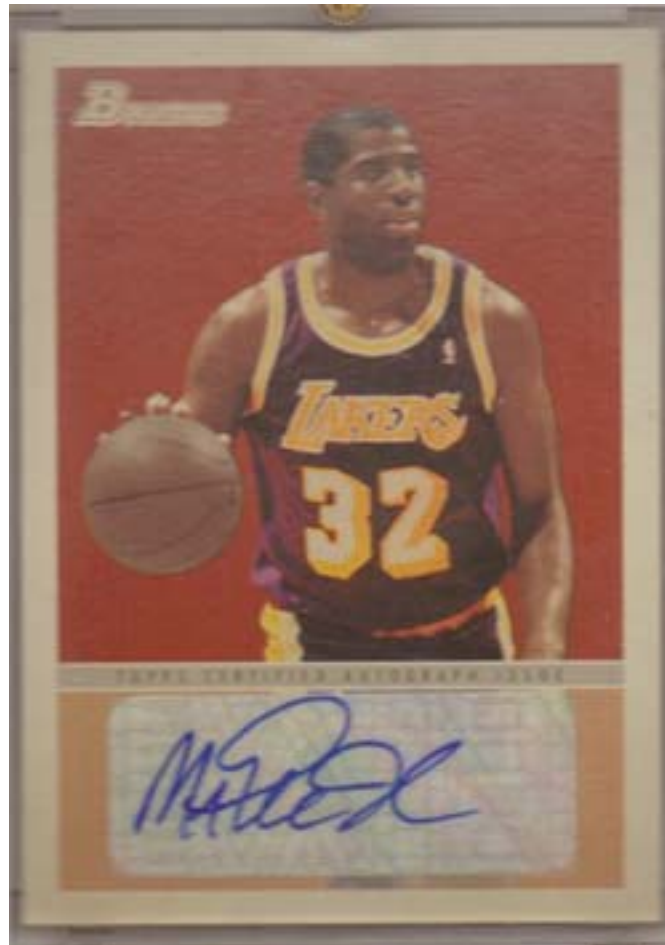
EXTRA! EXTRA! Just before the deadline for submitting this article arrived, there was some major hobby news. Kobe Bryant, star of the Los Angeles Lakers, has announced that he will be leaving Upper Deck to join Panini to sign product for them. Kobe's first Panini autographs will be available in the release of Prestige basketball, which will be available to purchase in early October.

As always, we would like to thank you for taking some of your time to read this article, and we really hope that you enjoy it! If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about anything in this article, or in the basketball forums in general, please do not hesitate to PM garnett\_21, trevorp121, or any other member of the basketball team. Again, thank you for taking your time to read this!





For this month's Basketball Showcase section, we haven't seen too many great pulls, but the one that we did find is pretty nice! If you would like to show off your card, and possibly be featured in this magazine, stop by the Basketball Show and Tell forum and look for the "Basketball Showcase" thread, or PM a basketball moderator!



Card: 2009-10 Bowman '48 Magic Johnson auto  
Member: JammingJames23  
Pulled From: Two loose packs of 2009-10 Bowman '48





## Featured Collection of the Month By Nathan Loewy aka garnett\_21

For those that don't know, my main player collection is of Kevin Garnett. I began collecting cards of Mr. Garnett after I joined SCF, in October of 2007. Before joining the site, I only owned approximately 12 different Garnett cards - now I own nearly 800 different!

My first trade for a Kevin Garnett card came in December of 2007, and while it was only a base card, it is what started my quest for as many different Garnett's as possible! Since then, I have added over 1 Garnett per day, on average. I now own 82 different game-used cards, and even with so many, I still remember which one was my first - that would be my 2004-05 Topps Chrome Chrometown Heroes / 500. While I own lots of game-used cards, I only own one autographed card: 2001-02 Upper Deck Ovation Superstar Warm-up - although, I do have a second on the way!

I have been asked many times what my favorite card is in my collection - it is very difficult for me to select one card, as I cannot limit myself to only one card. Because of this, I try to limit myself to one card per type of card. My favorite rookie would have to be my 1995-96 Finest. My favorite insert would be my 1996-97 Fleer Game Breakers with Isaiah Rider - this was one of my original Garnett cards. My favorite game-used would probably be my 2008-09 Bowman Relics. This one may confuse some of you, because it is not numbered, and is just a "base" game-used card - well, the reason it would probably be my favorite is because it was my first card with a Celtics jersey swatch on it! And lastly, my favorite autograph would be my (currently) lone auto - 2001-02 Upper Deck Ovation Superstar Warm-up Autograph.



If you are interested in following the additions to my collection, subscribe to my SCF blog - I am posting an entry every time I add a new card! Also, if you have any Kevin Garnett cards for trade, please PM me!



## What's So Unappealing About the WNBA

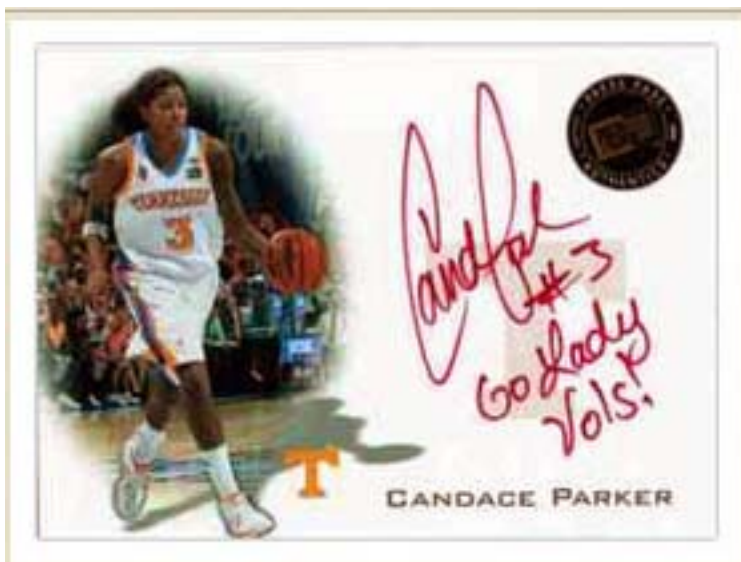
By Nathan Loewy aka garnett\_21

Basketball is a very popular sport in the United States. Fans of the game have many choices to watch, whether you prefer professional or college, in all months of the year. You can find games from the NBA, the National Basketball Developmental League (NBDL), NCAA college basketball, and even some high school basketball, all on a number of different TV channels or streaming online, in about nine months out of the year. But, there is one league that does not get the recognition it deserves, and it is played during those three other months of the year – the WNBA.

The WNBA was incorporated in 1996, with its first game played in 1997. Seasons run from June to September, with the playoffs played in September and October. The league currently has 13 teams, and each team plays 34 games a season. Most of the rules are the same or very similar to NBA rules, but the WNBA has a much smaller fan base. That is one thing that I don't understand. My thought is if you are a fan of professional basketball, it shouldn't matter whether professional men or professional women are playing, as it's still basketball being played. Regardless of that, there are several misconceptions about the WNBA that I will attempt to disprove.

Could the lack of a fan base be due to the scoring averages? Definitely not. If that's a reason for people deciding not to tune in to a game, then they need to watch one! The Phoenix Mercury scored the most points per game in the history of the WNBA, averaging 92.8 points per 40-minute game in the 2009 season. That's higher than the NBA-leading Phoenix Suns scoring average of 109.4 points per 48-minute game in the 2008-2009 season. If you convert those averages to points per minute, the Mercury scored 2.32 points per minute, compared to the Suns 2.28 points per minute. Yes, a WNBA team scores

more than any team in the NBA. So, that basically eliminates a lack of scoring as a deterrent.



Could it be the lack of flashy plays? Possibly, because the WNBA players don't show off as much as their NBA counterparts. But again, if you think the WNBA doesn't have any flashy plays, you definitely need to watch a game! Sure, there aren't the 360-degree dunks, or alley-oop passes, but who says that passing and layups can't be flashy? Look to Steve Nash and Chris Paul for examples of that. Moreover, passing and layups get back to the fundamentals of the game, which are essential to basketball. You can't have



a game of all dunks – that would become quite boring. Plus, there are a few players in the WNBA who do dunk – Candace Parker of the Los Angeles Sparks threw down two dunks during her rookie season in 2008! So, I don't believe that this would be a real reason for not watching the WNBA. This would be more of an excuse for someone who has predetermined thoughts about it prior to even experiencing it.

Another aspect that surprises me about the lack of fans is the ticket prices. You can go to a WNBA game, in the lower level, for less than \$20 in most cases. The Minnesota Lynx recently had meal deals, in which you would get a few concessions along with a lower level ticket for \$13! Yes, that is cheaper than most upper-level tickets at any NBA arena. The reason behind cheaper tickets is the WNBA's salary cap is less than \$1 million. For 2009, the cap stood at \$803,000, with the maximum salary for any player for a season standing at \$99,500. This allows the WNBA to be more family-oriented and kid

friendly, but games rarely, if ever, sell out, and most games' attendance reaches less than half their capacity.

So before you say, "No, I don't want to watch it," or "No, I don't like it," give it a chance! Watch it again or for your first time! I would bet that you will enjoy it.







## CARD OF THE MONTH WINNERS FOR AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

WINNER

tmoneywon

2009 Press Pass Showcase Prized Pieces Gold Kyle Busch #01/45 (16 Votes)



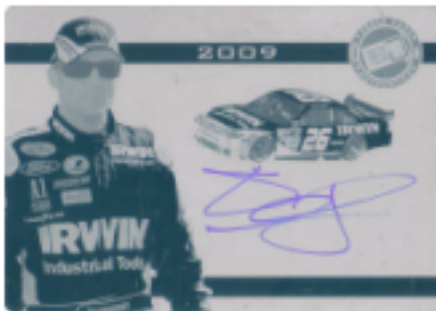
2<sup>nd</sup> PLACE (8 votes)  
pa43fan



3<sup>rd</sup> PLACE (6 votes)  
mdclapps



T-4<sup>TH</sup> PLACE (4 votes)  
JKC (BOTH CARDS)



### New Members' Corner

By Matthew Cawley aka HerdsMan87

Welcome to the newest additions to the New Members team: WVcoltsfan, Angel0430 and Rybowski!

New Members:

If you have a question or problem, don't forget to "ASK LEO" this is located in the sticky section of the Meet & Greet Forum

#### **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL**

new mebers, if you haven't done so already, Please update your profile & Make sure your mail trade address looks like this EXAMPLE .

John Doe 1234 main street, your city, your state/province, postcode, country

Be courteous, answer your private messages...

Want to trade with the New Member team?

Lzuperku collects Saints

Nascards collects Jimmie Johnson

Patriotsguy collects New England Patriots

HerdsMan87 collects Marshall University Football Alum

Madman1978 collects Pittsburgh Steelers

Jr4thechamp collects Dale Jr.

Vosen8832 collects Green Bay Packers

Puffster31 collects Negro League Players

Sharpsooner405 collects Oklahoma University Football Alum

WVcoltsfan collects Peyton Manning

Angel0430 collects Roberto Clemente

Rybowski collects DeSean Jackson

Lets Trade!

As always if you wish to join our new member team, don't hesitate to PM me.



## **Five Players to Watch in 2009-2010**

**By Kevin Lee aka gosens151911**

With the 2008/09 season finished and the 2009/10 one quickly approaching, it's once again time for collectors to start watching the fluctuation of card values begin. The 2009/10 season is important for many players to either solidify their place as NHL stars or become the fateful draft bust. Many collectors will definitely be watching many players closely. Here are five players whose upcoming season will no doubt have the biggest impact on their card values.

### 5. Justin Pogge



Pogge had already been named the goalie of the future for the Leafs before even playing a single NHL game. With many minor league successes, including a gold medal in the 2006 World Junior Championship for Team Canada, there was no reason to doubt that this Canadian kid would shine for Toronto when his time came. He was so hyped that he was given a #/99 rookie card in the 2008/09 The Cup, usually one of the most sought-after cards. Unfortunately his few starts in the NHL weren't the greatest and already people began calling him a bust. Following the 2008/09 season, the Leafs signed Jonas Gustavsson, putting an end to Pogge's career with the Leafs. He was soon traded to the Anaheim Ducks. At only 23 years old, Pogge is still very young for a goaltender. The major question is whether he will crumble with past disappointments or persevere and become an elite goalie in the league. With many rookie cards on the market falling in value, he could be a solid investment if he ends up turning his career around.

### 4. Carey Price



Being a 5th overall pick by the Montreal Canadiens comes with high expectations, even more so being a goaltender. Following a solid rookie season, there were a few who began comparing Price to Patrick Roy, one of the greatest goalies Montreal had. Unfortunately the 2008/09 season was not very friendly for Price. He started off well before running into an injury. Upon returning, he along with his entire team struggled, barely clinching a playoff spot before being swept by the Boston Bruins. The result was many of his cards falling a bit in value. Nevertheless, with the new season approaching and the hype always surrounding the Canadiens, his cards have begun to climb back up in value.

Now it's all up to him to show whether he will become the star the Canadiens had hope they drafted. His cards values will always remain relatively high as he plays for Montreal, but the question is whether they can go up more. If he plays well and brings Montreal deep into the playoffs, there is almost no doubt they can.





### 3. Semyon Varlamov



Totally unknown at the beginning of the 2008/09 season, his rookie cards were being sold for a few dollars each. However Theodore's struggling play in the 2008/09 playoffs paved the way for Varlamov to enter the spotlight. He shined in the first round, leading the Capitals past the NY Rangers, advancing to the second round for the first time in since 1998. However, the Capitals were eliminated in the second round. Nevertheless, Varlamov gained himself a new legion of collectors and his cards quickly skyrocketed in value. The question now remains whether or not he can go a full year as a #1 goalie. Only then will the true value of his cards be known.

### 2. Steven Stamkos



One of the most hyped rookies in some time, Stamkos had become the new face of the Tampa Bay Lightning. Being the number one overall pick came with the expectations of a great rookie season. Unfortunately, the beginning of the 2008/09 season was not friendly as his minutes declined with a poor point production. However, he turned it around in the second half of the season, still managing to be fifth in rookie scoring. Nevertheless, his early season falter led to his cards probably not having as high a value as they could. The 2009/10 season may be the season he establishes himself as an elite forward and thus raise his rookie card values up to those of other recent stars such as Kane and Toews.

### 1. Steve Mason



Mason was likely one of the biggest surprises of the 2008/09 season. An injury to starting goaltender Pascal LeClaire opened the door for Mason to play in the NHL. He took the opportunity and thrived, winning the Calder Trophy for rookie of the year and leading the Blue Jackets to their first ever playoff appearance. Unfortunately for Mason, he plays for the Blue Jackets and doesn't have the advantage of being on a big market team such as Carey Price. However, he is Canadian, which will definitely increase his card values. Nevertheless, his cards will likely see a change in value this upcoming season based on his play, whether it be up or down. Many wonder if he was

simply a one-year wonder, only time will tell.



## Upper Deck's Rookie Extravaganza

By Andrew Long aka Samuwry7

Ding. A call light beckons me to the leftmost elevator. Brass doors make way to reveal the great glass back of the elevator, and beyond it, downtown Toronto. Captivated by the cityscape, I wheel my suitcase inside and absorb the view, not yet realizing my mistake. Though a metropolis, the grass and greens that accent this city do not seem to lack sincerity or authenticity, unlike the native shrubbery of my own Los Angeles suburb. And here, they occur more often. It could be my raw excitement, or the last whispers of my fourth United Airlines vodka tonic, but the city looks magnificent. Yet in my scenic captivity, before I even turn to choose a button, the brass doors close behind me, and the elevator begins its ascent. At this, I turn to investigate. Despite the many floors of the Westin Harbour Castle, this elevator only stops at one: the thirty-ninth. The restaurant. I punch the lobby button in bursts but the elevator has made up its mind. I surrender and return my attention to grey and green Toronto, which draws out more and more with every floor ascended. Ding. The doors perform their formality on the 39th, and then back down I go. I re-shoulder my carry-on and swing my suitcase around to leave, but I turn back now and then for an extra glance at the city.

Ding. The doors open to the sight of three young men, two strong and strapping, and a pudgier, more mortal third. They gather themselves to enter my elevator. One of them totes a hockey bag and stick. "Wrong elevator guys," I say, still practicing my Boston accent. I'd been in character for two long flights and a taxi ride, and wasn't about to quit now. "This one only goes to the restaurant." All three take my caution on faith, and fall back to find another lift. The call button is again pushed, and at the ding, we all pile into a fully-functional elevator and push our floors. This one has no view. I eye the two athletic guys, and in the awkward silence of the elevator my suspicions twist until I am compelled to ask, "What brings you guys to Toronto?"

The taller, strongly-built caucasian kid says tentatively, almost shiftily, "Ah, we're here to do a thing for Upper Deck." "Oh yeah? So am I," I kick back. I ask after their names. Again, the tall kid answers. "I'm Eric Tangradi [of the Pittsburgh Penguins], and this is P.K. Subban [of the Montreal Canadiens]." He gestures towards the shorter, dark-skinned athlete holding the hockey bag and stick. The introduction of the average Joe that accompanies Tangradi is somehow lost in the moment. We small-talk. Ding. The doors open and close on Subban's floor, and the elevator is down to three. More small-talk. Where am I from? Ah yes, he knows Anaheim well. Tangradi swings the conversation back around.

"So what do you do with Upper Deck?" Ding. The doors open on Tangradi's floor. His travelling companion, which I now assume is a relative, leaves first. Tangradi politely holds the door for my answer. "I'm the rookie boot camp coach," I reply. His expression indicates he isn't quite sure what I mean. "Well... see you later," he says, letting go of the door. "See you tomorrow," I reply. The doors close, and the elevator continues upward. I think about my answer to his question, and what tomorrow will be like. I don't know exactly what I mean either. I need to practice my lines. Ding.

**Want to know what Andrew was doing at Upper Deck's NHL Rookie photo shoot? Make sure to read our November issue out on the 2nd November.**