

Remembering the Madness
The Macho Man 1952-2011



Collector's Corner

Also Inside:

Box Reviews

Contest Entries

... and more !

FEATURE

Hobby Crash Inevitable?

By Sean McCafferty



SCF

"The vast majority of game used cards end up in a dollar bin somewhere"

PayPal

eBay



BUY ... SELL

WHAT IS YOUR BEST OFFER?

SUPER COLLECTOR

Who: Stan Dybus Jr.
Collects: Anything Mike Piazza

I started collecting Piazza around 1998. I was a big card collector growing up, but as the hobby progressed and more and more products began to surface, I thought that focusing my collection on my favorite player would be more practical and just as rewarding.

As a diehard New York Mets fan, you I was definitely excited when the Mets traded for Piazza in 1998. This is when my Piazza collecting habit kicked into high gear.

eBay quickly became my favorite website, as it allowed me to pick up anything that I didn't already have. My biggest source for filling out my collection was BackMark Collectibles in Reagen Heights, N.Y. The owner, Ron Mark was always on the lookout for cards, autographs, memorabilia and everything Piazza for me.

I am still always on the lookout for new things to add to my collection however buying a house led to my memorabilia and card buying to slow down significantly. What I am focusing on now is filling out my regular issue, memorabilia, autograph and insert cards portion of my collection.



My Collection includes:

- More than 2500 total cards
- More than 340 memorabilia cards
- 13 autograph Cards
- 1900-plus different regular-issue and insert cards
- Four autographed balls
- Seven autograph pictures
- 42 bobbleheads
- 20 statues
- One game-used Mizuno bat
- One game-used pair of batting gloves and wrist bands
- Numerous miscellaneous memorabilia and other oddball items

Are YOU a Supercollector? We want YOU in Beckett Sports Card Monthly ...

<http://www.beckett.com/news/2011/06/are-you-a-supercollector-we-want-you-in-beckett-sports-card-monthly/>

Apply at the link above to be featured as a supercollector in Beckett Sports Card Monthly! Let's get some SCF members in their magazine! Good luck people!

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The Money Issue

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

Collecting used to be a hobby, it used to be all about fun but lately it just seems like it is a big business which is solely about the money. Personally, I collect two players Patrick Roy and Martin Brodeur. For the hockey fans amongst you, you are very well aware of who these guys are for other sports fans well, let's just say that these two guys are number 1 and number 2 in total career wins in the NHL. Yup, they are the best of the best there is no doubt. With the star status normally comes the star price tag however and putting my collection came at quite the hefty price.

To a collector, their collection is often priceless until one day, life issues come knocking at your door and you have no choice but to get some money one way or another. For me, that one way has been selling some of my Brodeur cards. No matter how much I think about it, I absolutely cannot bring myself to part with any of my Roy cards, Brodeur has always been number two for me but right now, he is my number one solution.

To be honest, I thought that my priceless cards were worth more than what the collector's bible (sense the tone) Beckett says they are. The first card I sold thankfully did not book in Beckett. It was one of the cornerstones of my collection; a The Cup Rookie Tribute autographed patch numbered to 10 only. Result? I was able to sell it for 675\$ on eBay by listing it as a "Buy it Now or Best Offer". I had listed a dual autograph of Brodeur and Lundqvist 6/10 from Upper Deck Black on there as well but received no offer for it, perhaps it had to do with the BIN price which I had set at \$250 but it is not easy to put a value on cards. Needless to say, that one did not sell. I have now relisted it as an auction with a starting price of \$49.99, so far, 6 watchers but not bid. I listed three more cards for auction as well, all 3 from The Cup. Two of them have been bid on; they both had a starting price of \$49.99...who wouldn't bid on an Honorable Number and a Signature Patch?

The above is an extract from my "A Big Business" article which gave me the idea to have this month edition of the magazine be "the Money Issue". I thought it would be interesting to hear where our other writers stand on the financial aspect of the hobby and I am glad I decided to do that as some of the pieces that were produced did cheer me up.

So, read the articles, see if you agree or not and if like me you are currently having to say goodbye to part of your collection for financial reasons, well, I hope you can find some solace in the fact that you're not the only one in that situation.

Before I let you get on with this month's issue though, I feel I should mention that we will be taking a break next month and the magazine will be back in August. It's summer for everyone after all and some of us (i.e. me) have to move in a new flat and won't have the Internet for a while in July. Until then, have fun reading, collecting and just generally hobbying! See you in the next issue on the 1st August!



Can the Market Sustain these Prices or Is a Hobby Crash Inevitable?

By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan

Like many other hobbyists out there, I really enjoy busting wax. I know full well going into it that I'm not likely to pick up a lot of cards that I need, but I'm always hoping that I'll get something nice. Keep the ones I want, and trade or sell the ones I don't. Really simple formula.

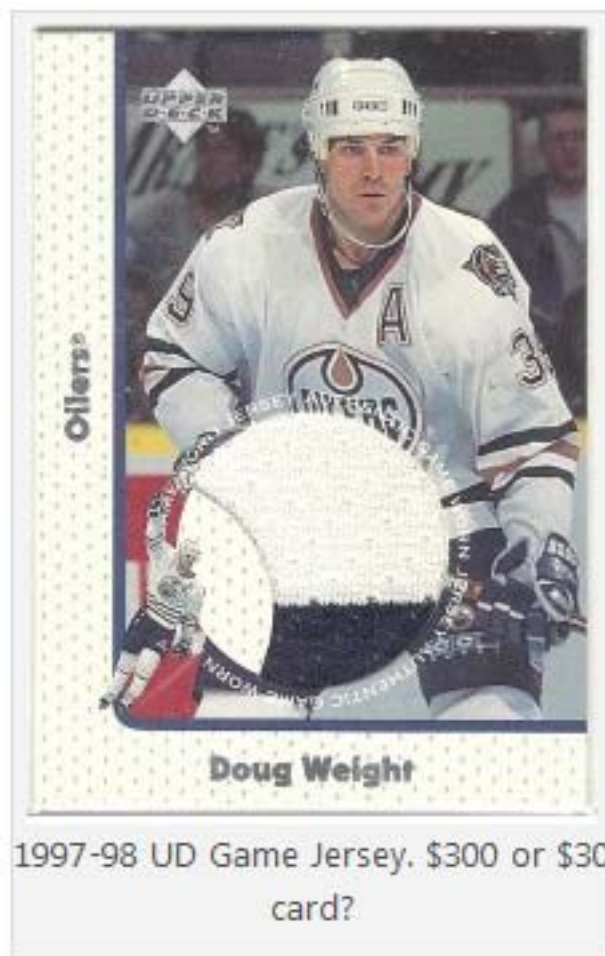
I do really wonder though, does the thrill of the big pull make up for all those bad breaks? Personally, I try to limit the products I open to sets I'm collecting, or sets that have some potential for cards I really want to add to the PC. I've even made it a personal rule this year that I would support any product that included Bill Ranford, the main focus of my hockey card collection.

I've always treated hockey cards as a hobby, and never as an investment. I sincerely hope that most hobbyists out there feel the same way, otherwise I see an inevitable bubble burst coming.

Boxes of hockey cards will cost us anywhere from \$25 (for Score, or Victory) right up to nearly \$400 (for The Cup) and there's lots in between. When we're getting value for our money, I don't think any price point should be considered bad. Some enthusiasts have thousands to spend, others have tens of dollars. There is enough variety that an eight year old should be able to have fun, and so should a fifty eight year old.

But what are we getting for our money? Most mid-range (or better) products will guarantee a certain amount of Rookie Cards, Game Used, and Autographs. These are the cards that collectors have come to expect to be included in every box. Many of us out there don't even keep our base cards. The result? We've seen manufacturers include more and more of what we want, and we've seen those 'hits' steadily decline in value.

There was a time, back in the mid-late-90s, when a Game Used card was an exceptionally rare pull, and worth 100s of dollars. A Doug Weight card I really wanted to own back then would have cost me \$300 (or more).





I was able to buy the same card last year for about \$30. Most game used stuff that's been released of him in the meantime can be had for a couple of bucks. Obviously comparing the hobby as it was in 1997 to what it is today is unfair, much has changed, but I think that really puts into perspective how much things have changed.

It's really been one big chain reaction.

Rookies don't hold their value, because they're not rare enough? Okay, short print them all. Except when most "hits" are short printed and/or serial numbered – getting a short printed card becomes a lot more common. The result? It's no big thing, and limiting the production of these cards can only inflate their values so much.

Would anyone really miss 'hits' of Teemu Ruutu or Mike Lundin?

Everyone wants game used cards. Stop limiting their use to high end products, and put them in every product. Guarantee them in almost every box. There's no way to limit game used cards to just the super stars, so make game used cards of virtually anyone, and make lots of them. The result? The vast majority of game used cards end up in a dollar bin somewhere.

Autographs are a hobby staple. We saw the debut of "one autograph per pack" way back in 1994. Now? We've got autographs available in virtually any set that's release. Some are short print, many are on stickers. Most NHL regulars will see their signatures end up in packs at some point. The result? Autographs continue to decline in value. Common players sell for a couple of bucks, or less, and many "semi-stars" just get tossed in with them. Even the big stars are seeing their values drop. A Sidney Crosby autograph can be had for much less than you would have paid even 18 months ago. Press Plates used to be something very unique. Now you often see them change hands for less than \$20.

When you combine the over saturation of autographs game used, another 'hits' with the creation of super premium products (I'm looking at you, The Cup) it's a recipe for plummeting values. Want to buy an autograph of one of your favourite players? Why would you buy one that came from a \$5-a-pack product, when you can get one from a \$400-a-pack product? Got the super premium one for \$25?



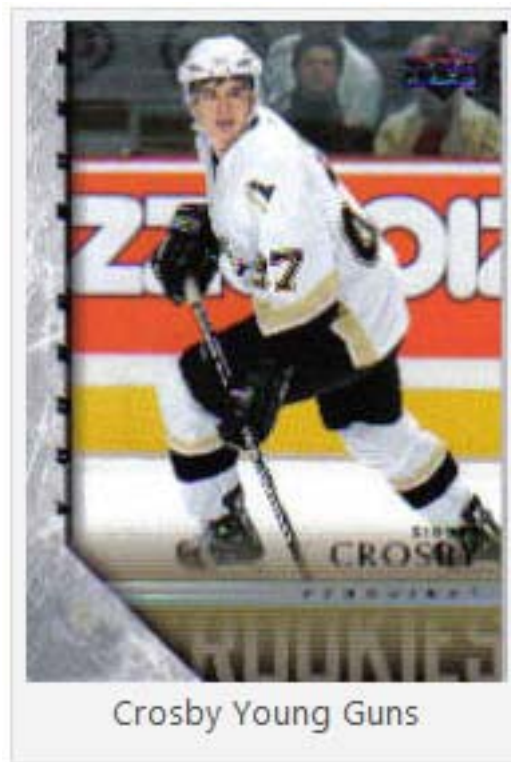


Why would you expect to pay more than half that from a lesser product?

Finally, there's something that I'd like to call "The Crosby Effect".

When the 2005-06 season started the NHL was coming out of a season long lockout. There was a buzz in the air that hockey was finally back. In addition – the most hyped player (since Mario Lemieux) was about to make his NHL debut, along with what could be best described as star stud-ded rookie class, brought on by the "double cohort" created by the work stoppage.

The result was the perfect storm for a renewed interest in hockey cards. People who'd long ignored this hobby were suddenly involved again. Many people who never collected cards in the past jumped in, as collecting became just a little bit more main stream.



New arrivals to the hobby in 2005-06 were treated to what will likely go down as the greatest Rookie class ever. The result of the aforementioned double cohort, the stars of two draft classes worth of players all made their debuts at the same time. Ryan Getzlaf, Cam Ward, Brent Seabrook, Zach Parise, Johan Franzen, Jimmy Howard, Mike Richards, Jeff Carter, Duncan Keith, Henrik Lundqvist, Dion Phaneuf, Thomas Vanek, Corry Perry, and generational talents Alexander Ovechkin & Sidney Crosby, are only some of the biggest names that earned their first appearance on NHL cardboard that season.

Rookies were always a popular thing to collect, and a class like this only reinforced it. It also created unrealistic expectations for future rookie classes, and a load of collectors who were bound to be disappointed when their investment into future products didn't appear to have a return nearly as generous.

Today – it's common to read a box break thread – see that someone spent \$150 on a box, and pulled out singles that could be had for a combined \$30. That might be one more hobbyist sick of the low value they get for a high priced box of cards.

The thing that's even more troubling, I see no way that this market crash can be avoided.

Even if the manufacturers were to chop production of game used cards to 10% of current levels next year – it wouldn't make the game used cards from the last decade any rarer. If Upper Deck decided to only release 25 Wayne Gretzky Autographs next season, it wouldn't make the rest on the market any



harder to find. If every single no-name rookie were no longer treated as a ‘hit’ it wouldn’t raise the value of the big name ones. If we don’t see another press plate for 3 years, they likely won’t be any better received than they are now.

Less autographs and less game used would make products cheaper to make, and savings could be passed onto collectors when they’re buying the products. Less total products could help boost the value of rookie cards. But could the manufacturers deal with the profit losses they’d see with fewer releases, and lower priced boxes? Probably not.

If the products were returned to their roots, and were marketed on their designs, photography, and content – with autographs and game used being a rare bonus – there would probably be an entire generation of collectors that would turn their back on the hobby. We’re collecting in an age where 95% of the cards we pull are immediately considered junk by most people. Manufacturers would be out of business because their products would be unsellable.

I see a late 90s-esque crash in sports cards as inevitable, and I see it happening soon. Those collectors that that toss money into this hobby because it’s fun, and expect little out of it other than the enjoyment it brings them, they’ll be okay. Those that are in it because they see investment potential, and want to see a good return on box breaks? I fear for the hobby – because I don’t see how those people are going to stick around.





- June 22: Zenith Hockey, Gold Standard Basketball
Elite Football,
- June 29: Luxury Suite Hockey



- June 1: Stealth Racing



- June 2: SP Legendary Cuts Baseball
- June 21: Sweet Spot Football



- June 29: WWE Champions Wrestling



The Economics of Player Collecting By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

Approximately twenty-two times per year, I have the great joy of doing my initial run-through of a new hockey product's checklist. While the search begins as a general scan for various subsets and players of general interest, it does not take long for me to get to the main purpose of the checklist search and utilize the Ctrl+F function on my web browser/Excel to look for two particular names. This is the routine of many player collectors, I am sure, to scout out just what Upper Deck/Panini/In The Game have in store for us in the newest release. My eyes light up when I see one of the names (so it goes when it's a #4 defenceman) and depending on how many times I see the other name I am either content or a little concerned. When you collect the most popular and thus most expensive active goaltender in the hobby today, you hope for balance.



When the cards inevitably reach the market, I generally have an idea in mind as to how much it is going to cost me and what the actual market values will be for these two players. After three-plus years of collecting, it gets to the point where I know what constitutes a fair price for an autograph or memorabilia card of my two main collected players. When you have purchased as many of them as I have, you do not just help set the market; indeed, sometimes you are the market. There are some anomalies and semi-regular price adjustments, but over time you attach a figure in your mind as to what you are willing to pay for a particular type of card. This is one of the many positives that player collectors bring to the hobby: they play a central role in establishing a trend in market values for the players that they collect.

Because I collect two players that are at opposite ends of the hobby spectrum, there are really two stories to tell here. The first story is about the super-popular player and going to whatever lengths are necessary to acquire the cards that you want. The second story is about the niche player, the guy that does not have a huge following but for whom you truly have a large hand in establishing that player's card values. There are certain areas which overlap, but in many ways they are two very different tales to tell.

Collecting a very popular player brings with it a special set of challenges that are somewhat unique in the hobby. These challenges include, but are not limited to: intense competition, selectivity, and seasonal spikes in prices.

Whenever a checklist is released there will inevitably be a certain card or number of cards that virtually any of the player's followers will key in on as a primary focus to acquire. If it is a particularly short-printed card, some will file the card as "it's nice to dream" while others will make a decidedly con-



certed effort to acquire the card at all costs. Because all collectors are on a different budget, where you stand on a particular card will often depend on where your bankroll sits. We all have to be realistic with our budgeting, and when it comes to an incredibly popular player, we must have often have Jedi-like instincts and train ourselves to let go of everything we fear to lose. While we all know that we will never be able to acquire every card of the player we collect, there are some truly amazing cards that we feel that we must have to set our collection apart from others. The problem here is that the others also feel the same way. So when we see something like 2010-11 SP Authentic Sign of The Times Duals Carey Price/P.K. Subban on a checklist, we know immediately two things: 1. "I have to have it!" and 2. "Everybody is going to want that card." Supply and demand are such that initial sales of this card featuring hard-signed signatures of the two most popular current Montreal Canadiens approached \$200 on eBay. It will be some time until prices settle down to make this card attainable for many collectors.

To return to the theme of letting go, another unique challenge for player collectors of extremely popular players is the knowledge that there are going to be huge numbers of cards released every season. One only needs to look at the SCF Inventory System to see that Sidney Crosby has averaged nearly 400 cards every year since 2007-08. Given "The Kid's" popularity and overwhelming demand, even obtaining 25% of these cards each year is a notable feat. As such, a collector must be selective when deciding to pursue the cards of that favourite player. If you make autographs a primary focus of your collection, you simply cannot allow yourself to get bogged down shelling out \$8 here, \$12 there, or a few decent traders to get inserts and parallels. Sure, these additions boost the quantity in your collection, but they do so at the expense of quality additions. You need to remain focused on the big picture of your collecting goals, and try to minimize the number of sub-optimal acquisitions in order to use your hobby budget to get the cards you truly want and will want to show off in a show & tell thread.

While the hobby's top performers can always be relied upon to sell strongly, there are certain times when they sell even stronger. A hot streak, reaching a certain milestone, and a strong playoffs run are but three things that can cause a spike in sales prices. Last year at this time, Carey Price was riding the pine during the Canadiens' deepest playoffs run in 17 years. While some cards were still doing well on the secondary market, things generally were in a real funk, which was something of a blessing for those collectors that remained loyal to him. When there was a lot of talk that Price might be traded out of Montreal, his card values reached their nadir. And then Carey Price went out and had one of the best statistical seasons for a goalie in Montreal's history. Price's card sales continually increased throughout the year, his hobby hotness reaching almost the same level as his rookie campaign. Not only were sceptical collectors fully back on board, he was now attracting new collectors as well. Whereas last year you could get a hard-signed autograph card for \$20-\$25, by the end of this season initial sales of similar cards (i.e. SP Authentic Sign of the Times) were doubling those numbers. Price has once again established himself at the top of the hobby food chain when it comes to active goaltenders, and if he maintains his performance levels from this year collectors will continue to pay premium prices for his premium cards.



That is the story for player collectors of the game's most prolific athletes. What about the guys on the other end of the hobby spectrum, the niche players that have no less dedicated followers, even if they are in fewer numbers? For these players and their collectors, the challenge is different than it is for the superstar collectors. Some areas that have to be considered are: maintaining pricing structure, motivation, and keeping resources available for procurement.

Earlier I touched on the concept of not just setting the market for a player, but actually being the market for a player. For a role player, there are often only a handful of dedicated people that will focus their attention on his cards. As such, these people determine what constitutes a fair price for particular cards of this player. Knowing that there are only a certain number of high-end cards out there, and having acquired many of them, there is a tendency to establish a pricing structure for any given card. If I paid X dollars for a 1-of-1 The Cup Black Rainbow—considered the pinnacle of a player's high-end rookie-year cards unless they have a shield card—that is likely going to be the ceiling for any purchase of any given card. If I paid Y dollars for a 2009-10 Upper Deck High Gloss #'d /10, if somebody comes along and expects Y+20 dollars for the 2010-11 version they are likely to be sorely disappointed. Most fellow traders will not take this approach when they know that they have a very nice card that a player collector wants, and will be very helpful in contributing to the collection, but there are those that think they can extort a very high price by preying on the collector's interest in getting as many cards as possible of that player. If we hold close to our pricing structure, we can usually find another copy out there to keep the percentages high. There are of course limitations to this; fellow SCF member 30ranfordfan describes a situation in which a Bill Ranford/Bernie Nicholls 1/1 patch card was lost forever: "I lost out on a parallel version of that same card – the 1/1 version – because a Nicholls collector felt that spending more than \$200 was a good idea, and I didn't." I can understand this sentiment, as there is a Josh Gorges card out there that has a much too-high price tag for my liking, and so it remains out of my grasp.

Because the role player is not a superstar, he is often overlooked in product checklists by the card manufacturers. It is unlikely that he will be featured in a high-end product and a certainty that he will not appear in The Cup beyond his rookie year. He may only see cards in the larger sets like Upper Deck 1 and 2, Score, and O-Pee-Chee, and even then it will only be a base card and whatever parallels are produced. When the guy you like only gets a dozen cards per year, and you are able to get them all quickly and cheaply, you will find that you can go weeks or even months without a new addition to your collection. For some, this can result in frustration and a lack of desire to continue the collection – and when that happens, you may find that you are stuck with those cards because you cannot find a trade partner to unload the collection upon. We see this happen pretty regularly in fact. Unless you have a very solid reason for collecting a role player, some sort of attachment that is deeper than "he seems cool, and he's cheap!" it is not advisable to collect his cards.



If you are not concerned about losing motivation for your favourite role player, one thing that is always on our minds is when the next white whale will surface. There is always “that card” that you kick yourself over for not buying right away when the product came out, and then you don’t see another copy for two years. You know that because of set builders, team collectors, and others who may have a passing interest in a high-end card of the player, you are going to pay dearly for it. It is just part of the game; my friend HammerHawks, who presently needs one card for a complete Niklas Hjalmarsson collection, puts it like this: “If it [the elusive card] ever pops up, money is not an object. If I am able to pay for it, I will. No questions asked.” For me, because the majority of my hobby dollars go to acquiring new Carey Price cards as they steadily stream out on to the market, there is usually not a lot kept in reserve for my short Josh Gorges want list when a card makes an appearance. I will usually sell off a few things to cover the purchase, but it does impact my other collecting for a short period. Wherever possible I try to make a fair offer up front to secure the card, but if it goes to an auction or a bidding war, I am faced with the choice of sticking to my guns about my pricing structure or overpaying to secure a card I fear I will not see again for a long time.

Player collecting is a very rewarding aspect of the hobby. While we all have favourite teams, collecting the cards of our favourite players brings a great amount of fun to our hobby. Scouring trade lists for new cards, opening up the mail for the latest arrival, these are the moments that make the hobby worth while. The financial aspect of player collecting can sometimes be daunting, as players that are hugely popular around the League can inspire a lot of competition that drives up prices, while those niche players give us some relief and help bring structure to our collecting methods. Ultimately, money plays a big role in our collections, but it is the passion that is the real value.

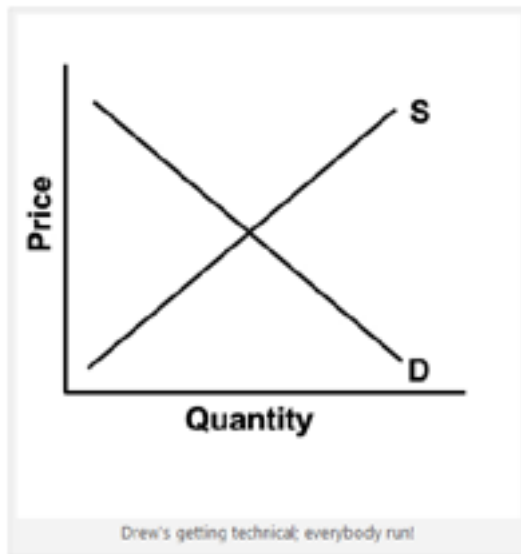




Economics 101 and Card Values
By Drew Pelto aka *censored*

I'm sure everyone's heard the phrase "I used to be a millionaire, but my mom threw my baseball cards away." Kids in the 1950's through 70's who are adults now always look back and say "Oh yeah, I used to have that card" and silently weep as they see the \$200 price tag stuck on it now. Because of that, all those old collectors from the classic days told their kids in the 80's and 90's to hang onto their cards and keep them in good condition. They'll be worth something someday!

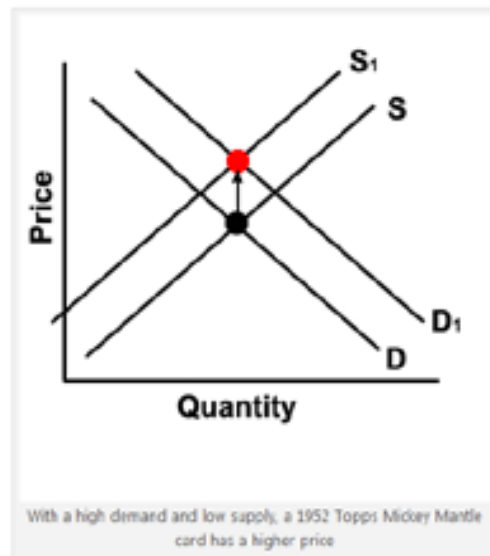
And it's because of that latter remark that cards from that era aren't worth squat.



I know what you're saying: cards are worth money still. And they are. If those cards are serial numbered to under 100, have a piece of a jersey, patch, bat, stick, laundry tag, cancelled check signature, helmet, or chewed gum, is a player's rookie card, or is from before 1980 or so. Preferably all of the above. Aside from that, the era of just a base card of a star player ever fetching even \$25 is dead. Long dead.

I started collecting in 1990, doing it on a serious basis in 1991. I'm sitting on a good 100,000 cards into which I sank years of allowance, holiday gift money, and paychecks thinking they'll be worth something someday just because they get old. And it's never going to happen. Age doesn't change the value of a card. It's all simple economics: supply and demand.

The variables that figure into the value of a card can be broken down pretty simply: how many people want the card, and how many copies of the card exist. Let's take the ubiquitous 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle card. Not many exist in good condition. In fact, not many exist at all because Sy Berger supposedly took a barge out into the Atlantic Ocean one day in the 1960's and shoved the overstock of the 1952 high series wax boxes into Davy Jones' locker. So supply is low. It's a card everyone recognizes. And it's of a great player. So demand for that card would be high. Really now, if you didn't know how much the card was worth, and only knew the basic facts about it, would you still want it? I know I would, and I'm not even a Yankee fan. It's a great card. High demand with low supply makes a price in the range of a new luxury car or a



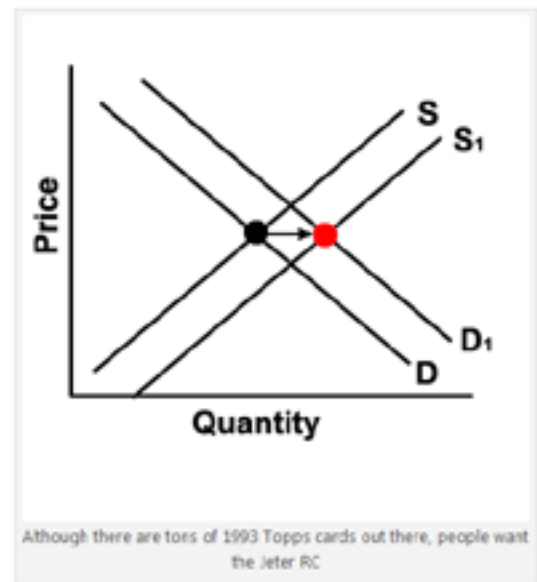


house.

Got it so far? Good. Let's just look at an ordinary overproduction-era card, maybe a 1993 Topps Steve Avery. It's a card of just an average player– not anyone spectacular, just a guy with a good year or two who never went on to greatness. The set itself has near-zero significance. So obviously demand is pretty low for this card. As for supply, the sets in the 1990's were notoriously overprinted. You can still find unopened packs, boxes, probably even cases of it today. It pervades boxes of commons to this very day. Supply is high. And thus with a high supply and low demand, the price is in the penny-nickel-dime range. Unfortunately, Photoshop ate my image so you'll just have to imagine it. Take the Mantle graph above, and switch the arrow and the red and black dots.

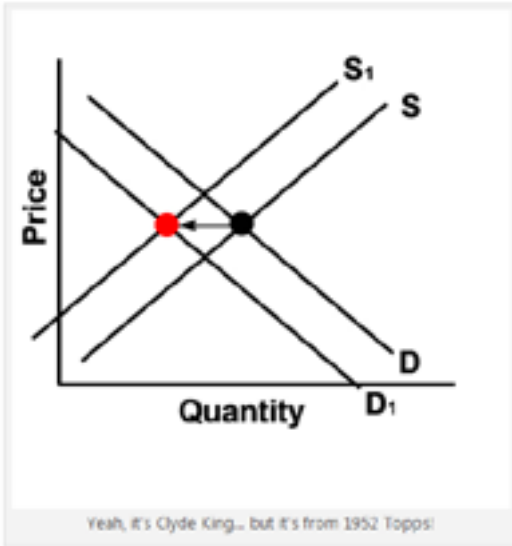
In between these two extremes are two types: high supply-high demand, and low supply-low demand, both of which would have probably the same sort of price.

Example of the first: let's take a 1993 Topps Derek Jeter. Obviously as a 1993 card, this is in pretty high supply. But in this case the demand is higher: it's the first card of the most popular active player in all of baseball. And thus with a high demand and high supply, the price will be kind of high, but not sky-rocketing high like Mantle. It's affordable, yet valuable.



Likewise, let's take a look at a 1952 Topps common, like Clyde King for instance. Do you know who Clyde King was? All I know is he was a Yankee manager at one time. Don't know him, don't care about him. A lot of collectors would probably say the same. Therefore demand is going to be low. However, this is one of those 1952 cards. Many ended up in 1950's and 60's trash cans as Mom threw away the kid's cards. Several were put in bicycle spokes. And still more just ended up in terrible condition from being carried around, put in shoeboxes, held together in stacks with rubber bands, and flipped only to land on playground gravel. So while demand is low, supply is low as well. Thus, the Clyde King again won't compare to the high-demand Mantle from that set, but it's certainly better than a low-demand 1993 Topps Steve Avery. It again is affordable, yet valuable.

If you still can't get it, think of it this way: you're in the desert, thirsty as all get out, and finally you come to a general store. Yes! That store has a bottle of water there. Double yes! Considering you're dying of thirst, you'd pay almost anything for that water, right? So you pay and quench your thirst with it, and then you see a second bottle. You could certainly use a second one after walking all day, but it's



not as necessary as that first one. But still, you buy it and you're a little more satisfied. Then a third bottle appears. You don't need it as badly, so you wouldn't be willing to pay as much for it. So you pay a little less, and by now you've really got to find a bathroom. A fourth one appears. Last thing you need. So you tell the store owner where he can put that fourth bottle. That's a brief description of supply and demand. It's also touching on the principle of diminishing marginal returns, but we'll skip that. This is a sports card site, not an economics class.

Those two factors are the main determining factor in card prices and values. If you saw two cards that only had one minor difference and one was numbered to 10, while the other was numbered to 5, which would you pay more for? The one numbered to 5 obviously: lower supply with similar demand.

Likewise, if you had a card of Albert Pujols numbered to 10 and a card of Darren Oliver numbered to 10, which would you get more money for? Pujols obviously: higher demand for a power-hitting All-Star first baseman than for a run of the mill LOOGY.

Age means nothing. Supply and demand are the factors. If you want to make those 1980's and 90's cards worth more than peanuts, there's only one way to do it. Get a load of friends and their cards together and rent a barge.





Breaking Ground

By Andrew Long aka Samuwry7

You know the kind— belly spasming, knees weak, face stretched to its limits, swimming in tears and delirium, desperately trying to hold onto the surface of the earth. It's the very best kind of laughing. On a perfect California day in 2009, this was us, my very good friend Nik and me, emerging from the Upper Deck store, surrendering our composure to our own incredulity, the irony of it all, our sheer dumb luck. We were



walking away with with nearly fifteen hundred bucks worth of 2009 SP Legendary Cuts Baseball and 2009-10 O-Pee-Chee Premier hockey, for which we hadn't paid a single red cent. Two months earlier, Nik and I entered the first SportsCardForum.com video contest. And it was the result of this contest, which, given our rather remarkable luck and armful of hobby prizes, now seemed perfectly ludicrous.

We lost.

In the days following our loss, I was sour. As far as I was concerned, first prize for the video contest, a \$100 gift certificate to CardsbytheBox.com, had been awarded to a breakthrough cure for insomnia. Yet today I can hardly begrudge the victor, since second place video yielded a much better prize— this simple message, sent to Nik's youtube account a short time after the contest:

“Packs to the People”

I thought this was awesome. Let me know if you want me to sponsor you packs for future episodes. I'd be willing to do it around a new release like 2009 MLB UD2 or 2009 NFL Draft Edition. Let me know your thoughts. In the meantime, I'm going to put you guys up on our Diamond Vision site. Great work.

Sincerely,

Chris Carlin
Sports Marketing Manager
The Upper Deck Company

<http://youtu.be/3Vbl3u5bLYs>

I almost exploded. Nik and I had drawn the attention of one of the premier card manufacturers in the



world. When that message finally fruited into those sponsored boxes of Sp Legendary Cuts and O-Pee-Chee Premier, and our hysterical near-meltdown outside the Upper Deck store, I was so happy about what was happening, I didn't really consider why it was happening, or the significance of it. We had done something new, though at that time, it wasn't really clear to me what that thing was.

Our tremendous armfuls of boxes did come a price— we had to use them make two more videos. The O-Pee-Chee Premier presented us with a new challenge. Our previous video, “Pack Break Missionary,” involved us approaching everyday people on the street and asking them to break a pack of cards on camera. People would break packs, and I'd react to it. With OPC Premier, we couldn't do that, being that each pack of the stuff cost around \$200, and we only had four of them. The concept started at first as a group of words in my head, words that sounded dramatic and exciting. I had this phrase stuck in my head, and I kept rolling the words around thinking about how I could integrate the packs of O-Pee-Chee Premier. The words were simply “hunt a live human being.” A few days later, I was on my knees in Huntington Park, bound and gagged, with a bag over my head, and one of my very best friends in the world was caressing my face with a knife. I'm sure at some point, as my hot breath filled up the bag, I asked myself, “how did collecting sports cards ever get me here?” The video used the packs of O-Pee-Chee Premier with great effect, and Nik and I were tremendously proud of the result, which you can see below.

<http://youtu.be/0UvVugQJipY>

Now, making that video was no easy task. There's about 20 hours of work in that video. Even more was spent in our next video, a return to the format of our original contest entry. Upper Deck rightly suggested we call it “Packs to the People,” since that's what people seemed to remember. We spent three 6-hour sessions on the street asking people to break packs. It was tough. Cameras scare people. Many were resistant, the idea being so foreign to them that it surely must be a scam, that the footage of them flipping through a pack of baseball cards would be twisted into porn and distributed to their closest relatives. After the second day, the incredible blessing of Upper Deck sponsorship now felt like a check we had written to Upper Deck, and were now struggling to cover. A full half case had been provided so that we'd hit a cut, but filming through the half case a pack at a time, searching for this cut, was gruelling. By the time we finished the entire video, the cards we'd received hardly felt like enough for all the work.

Though video was the medium we were working in, the value of these pieces, I realized, was applying a narrative to the process of card collecting. In my opinion, one of the great weaknesses of the hobby as a whole is the imbalanced emphasis on the what, rather than the how. How people have come to collect things should be valued and explored through narrative, for the benefit and growth of the entire hobby. In a time of economic decline, collectors are backing off breaking boxes, seeing that the value of the singles pulled hardly compares to box prices. The value isn't there. To combat this, I think more narrative devices have to be applied to the process of collecting, to renew interest and stoke box breaking in general. We need videos, stories, podcasts— the more the better. Stories are what interest people, and



that intrigue is a viable way to bring more people into the hobby. Breaking is the fire point for all collecting, and it must happen. The more of it, the better! What needs to transform is the mindset for why. If we can compete, looking for not only the most extraordinary cards, but the most extraordinary experiences in attaining them, we boost profit for card companies, who can in turn afford to add more value back in the boxes. The cycle improves, all through the power of storytelling. Upper Deck's sponsorship ultimately took me places where I never thought I could go, and made me see the hobby, enjoy the hobby, in a whole new way.





My Run to 20

By Wayne Rogers aka redskinfanva

As rookies we are trying to establish a good reputation as we are new to this forum and we want to get rid of that "send first" tag in trades and as i have made my run to the infamous 20 trades I would like to give some advice to rookie beginners trying to achieve the same thing as I did :

note : this is just from my experiences thus far and my opinion. Just trying to give newbies like me some "heads up" advice.

-There are some great guys/gals on here and will actually take the time to give you great advice..dont be shy just ask.

-Be patient..there are working people on here and not all people live on the thread.

-Try to do quick small dollar 1 card trades til you reach 20

-Try not to take on too much at one time (another lesson i have learned)

-When selling your cards remember a card is only worth what people are willing to pay for it..yes there are guides and eBay but remember ;members want good deals and you want to get your name out there if you want to move some inventory and keep in mind the economy isnt exactly being friendly either.(Advice for some vets too -hee hee)

-When you have a trade ;notice the person's location you're sending it to.It can be thousands of miles away so the trade completion may take a little longer..

-Use the tutorials, at first I just browsed but then when members corrected me or gave me advice, i found that actually reading them really helped (although i still made a mistake or 2 and you will because there are a lot of rules)

-Be very careful when using the terms "selling out" or "getting out of" or "taking a break" im not saying dont look but if something seems too good to be true more than likely that's the case..go with your "gut" feeling..(but that doesnt mean that everyone will rip you off either just be cautious...)

-If you're selling or trading to a member that really is into a specific team or player throw an extra card in for good measure if you can spare it.I'm not talking about a high-end or auto/jersey but just something small cause they will appreciate the courtesy.

-Have fun..if youre here for a big profit , good luck with that unless you just pulled a 1/1 of Bradford,Jordan,Mantle...

These are just a few things I have learned through my experiences so far as i made my run to 20..



Product Review: ITG Decades 1980s
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.

Product Description

1 pack per box

9 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$84.99 - \$99.99

Decades is the second product In The Game is releasing based on an extensive poll voted on by collectors two years ago. In The Game asked what was the most significant year in hockey history.

1972 narrowly won the poll over 1980 and a hockey trading card product was produced last year to commemorate 1972. This product sold out quickly and is still highly collected today.

Now In The Game has turned their attention to 1980.

There were so many events in the 1980s decade, In The Game choose to feature the entire decade in this product rather than just the year 1980.

But who could forget 1980.

Herb Brooks put together a team of young American hockey players who were supposed to have no chance to even medal at the 1980 Olympics. But they believed in Brooks and themselves and defeated a dominant Soviet Union team and then the Finns to win the history gold medal.

In The Game is pleased to feature hard signed autographs from every player on the 1980 US Olympic Hockey Team - The Miracle On Ice team. Bill Baker, Bob Suter, Buzz Schneider, Dave Christian, Dave Silk, Eric Strobel, Jack O'Callahan, Jim Craig, John Harrington, Ken Morrow, Mark Johnson, Mark Pavelich, Mike Eruzione, Mike Ramsey, Neal Broten, Phil Verchota, Rob McClanahan, Steve Christoff, Steve Janaszak and Mark Wells.

Decades 1980s is taking on a complete new look and collectors are going to love it.

Each box has a total of nine cards and they are all "Hits". Each box will be hand-packed and the inserts will be guaranteed per box.



One Decades Rookie Card
 One Non-Memorabilia Insert Card
 One 100 Years of Hockey Card
 Collecting Card.

What we pulled

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuu_5dx2LY



Base: None (No base in release)
 100 Years Of Collecting (1): Mike Bossy
 Decades Rookie (1): Dino Ciccarelli
 Battle Of Quebec (1): Joe Sakic/Chris Chelios

Dave Babych Jersey

Trophy Winners Brian Leetch Jersey

Brad Marsh Autograph



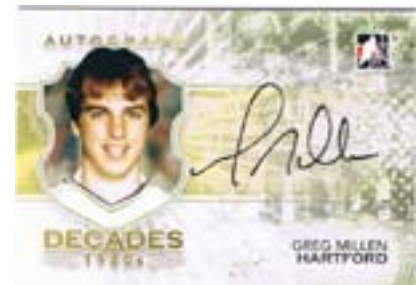
Between The Pipes Darren Pang 2-color Patch



Barry Pederson Autograph



Greg Millen Autograph





Design - 4.5/5
Fun - 5/5
Value - 4.5/5
Rebuy - 5/5
Total - 19/20 (95%)

February 22, 1980, six simple words resonated throughout out the United States and around the world. Al Michaels, sitting next to broadcasting partner Ken Dryden, with a mere few seconds left in the USA vs USSR Olympic semifinal uttered, "Do you believe in miracles? Yes!" Still to this day, those words bring chills to people who watched the game, saw the replays or simple lived it.

That was how the 1980s kickstarted, but it's only a glimpse into the marvel of the decade. If you lived during that era, you will never forget things such as your first Member's Only jacket, Cabbage Patch kid or the difference between Tomax and Xamot. It was the time of big hair, one-hit wonders, moonwalking and wearing your sunglasses at night.

For hockey, so much happened during the decade that ITG could not pinpoint a year or an event to center this product around. Accordingly, they are giving us ten years to celebrate. Decades 1980s streamlined collecting for everyone by not having any base cards. This product is about bringing you closer to the players of the 1980s. The box states "9 Hits", but in reality, there are six (3 memorabilia and 3 autographs). The other three cards are inserts.

Each box yields two specific inserts, 100 Years of Collecting and Decades Rookies. The third card is a mix of 1 of 8 various sets. 100 Years of Collecting is actually a set that is being released through four ITG products. Each product contains 25 of the 100 cards from the set. Decades Rookies focuses on the stars and legends who made their debut in the 1980s. Stalwarts such as Marion Lemieux, Steve Yzerman and Patrick Roy grace this set.

There are numerous memorabilia sets in Decades. Some are simple themes such as a generic jersey set or a carry over from another product as in Between The Pipes. There are versions that will yield four memorabilia swatches like Franchises and For Your Country. Even the ever popular autograph/relics can be found on occasion. In addition, there are three autographs in a box and all are on-card. Even better, there are no redemptions! ITG scores the proverbial card collecting hat trick with this one. Goal 1, create a product that collectors will enjoy opening. Goal 2, make the product worth the investment to resellers and collectors alike. Goal 3, keep the collectors coming back for more. Only a few times in a year does a product release where the price point and the yield are in harmony. This is definitely one of them! Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at In The Game for giving us the opportunity to review this release. For more information on all of their products, visit them at www.itgtradingcards.com.



Product Review: Panini Contenders Hockey
By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Description

24 packs per box
 5 cards per pack
 Current Retail Price (online): 104.99 - 119.99

Every insert set features a signed variation! If you're an autograph hound, Contenders is the brand for you!

Box break

- Each box includes FOUR Autographs, including at least three hard-signed Rookie Tickets!
- One Leather Larceny
- One Great Outdoors
- One Against The Glass acetate card
- Plus six additional inserts, including Draft Tandems, Lottery Winners, Rookie of the Year Contenders and more!
- 165 card set including 50 Rookies
- The Golden Ticket, 14-karat solid-gold trading card

What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7mu29gvaRQ>

Base: 98/100 (98%)
 Dupes: 5
 Classic Ticket SP (1): Darryl Sittler
 Playoff Ticket /100 (1): Zach Parise



Against The Glass (2)
 Awards Contenders (1)
 Awards Contenders Purple /100 (1): Jonathan Quick
 Draft Tandems (1)
 Great Outdoors (1)
 Leather Larceny (1)



- Legendary Contenders (1)
- Lottery Winners (1)
- Perennial Contenders (1)
- Rookie Of The Year Contenders (1)



Brandon Yip RC/Auto Redemption



Linus Omark RC/Auto

Derek Stepan RC/Auto x2





Final thoughts

Base - 4.5/5

Design - 4.5/5

Fun - 4/5

Value - 3/5

Rebuy - 2.5/5

Total - 18.5/25 (74%)

Finally, Contenders has made its way to hockey! A driving force for many years in football, Panini brought Contenders to the basketball masses two years ago and now it has found a home in hockey, but is the eviction notice already up? The base set comprises of 100 veterans, 15 retired players (short printed to 1 per box) and 50 autographed rookies. The cards are showy, but maintain the theme with the use of a "ticket" on one side to detail the player and franchises basic info (outside of the retired players). The other half is the player's photo. There is one veteran parallel called Playoff Ticket and they are numbered to 100.

In Panini's fine fashion, there are nine insert sets to encapsulate the spectrum of hockey from players to events. This does not include the highly sought after Golden Ticket cards. There are 20 subjects for this set and each card is a 1/1. It is made from 14 karat gold and can only be found as a redemption in Contenders. The cards are already produced, just waiting for a new home. On average, four autographed cards are found in every box. A huge plus is that at least three are guaranteed to be rookies with on-card autographs. That's a big thumbs up. But a bigger thumbs down is when two of the autographs are the same exact card, Derek Stepan anyone? So out of 50 possible rookie subjects, you put one in a box twice? Huge collation issue here.

When you crack open a box of Contenders, the excitement envelops you. Knowing that you are going to get at least three rookie autos lets your mind race towards thinking about who you might get. Each box contains almost the entire veteran base set, but an inexcusable act is committed when you get more duplicates than you would need to complete the set. Just give us the full set in the box. It's not the selling point of the box and it doesn't make collectors more or less likely to get more boxes. Though the onslaught of various inserts can be undaunting, the simplification of five cards in a pack makes the break fairly swift and still enjoyable. But the biggest faux pas that you can commit as a card manufacturer (outside of packaging damaged cards or having missing cards) is a collation issue that yields two of the same autograph in a box. The rookie autos are what brings collectors to drop the funds for Contenders. If this was an occasional box, it would not be a problem. Unfortunately, this has occurred over the entire production run and really it is unacceptable. Why should I keep buying something if the likelihood is I will see the same "hit" cards in the box? Food for thought...

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Panini for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all their products, visit them today at www.paniniamerica.net.



Product Review: 2011 Panini Prestige Football
By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Description

24 packs per box

8 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): 79.99 - 89.99

Box Break

- 4 Autograph or Material Cards (at least one autograph)
- 24 Rookies
- 2 Extra Points Gold
- 1 Extra Points Red
- 3 Draft Picks Light Blue
- 4 Stars of the NFL
- 1 Connections
- 1 League Leaders
- 1 TD Sensations
- 3 NFL Draft
- 4 Prestigious Pros
- 1 Inside the Numbers
- 1 Rookie Review and 1 NFL Passport



Highlights

- NFL Draft Class trapped autographed embroidered patch
- Top NFL rookies from the class of 2010 with autographed versions sequentially numbered to 299 or less
- Collegiate lettermen featuring an autograph within a letter of a top rookie's last name from the Class of 2011

What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCWXEzI4aQ>

Base: 140/200 (70%)

Dupes: 0

Rookies: 25/100 (25%)



Connections (1)
 Draft Picks Light Blue /999 (3): Blaine Gabbert,
 Davon House, Owen Marecic
 Inside The Numbers (1)
 League Leaders (1)
 NFL Draft (3)
 Passport (1)
 Prestigious Pros Red (4)
 Prestigious Pros Gold /100 (1): Santonio Holmes



Rookie Review (1)
 Stars Of The NFL (4)
 Xtra Points Gold /250 (2): DeAngelo Williams,
 Quan Sturdivant
 Xtra Points Green /25 (1): Jacob Tamme
 Xtra Points Purple /50 (1): Darren Sproles
 Xtra Points Red /100 (1): LeGarrette Blount

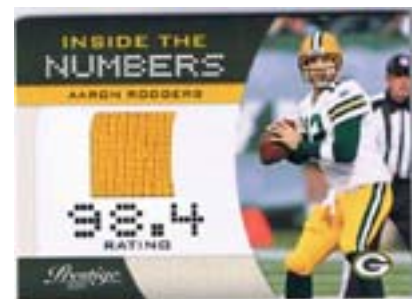
Platinum Patches Michael Turner
 3-color Patch



Draft Picks Rights Andy Dalton Auto /499



Inside The Numbers Aaron Rodgers Jersey /250



Passport Martez Wilson Auto /25

Preferred LeSean McCoy Jersey /250 (both not pictured)



Final thoughts

Base - 4.5/5
Design - 4/5
Fun - 3.5/5
Value - 4/5
Rebuy - 3.5/5

Total - 19.5/25 (78%)

Panini starts their foray into the 2011 football season with Prestige. With 200 veterans and 100 rookies, set collectors will have fun piecing this together. Especially when you consider some of the rookie are short prints. The design work is typical for Prestige over the last couple of years. A little busy with the border and presentation, but the full-body color photos are great with the veterans. The "in the facemask" view for the rookies is less than spectacular, but I guess you can only do so much to avoid logos without hurting card integrity. The Xtra Points parallels are back in multiple levels.

Do you enjoy insert/chase sets? Well, Prestige has enough for two or perhaps three releases. Take away the Xtra Points parallel and the Draft Picks Rights for the rookies, you will find nine more sets. Seems like a bit of an overkill, but this is the status quo traditionally for Prestige. When you toss in the numbered parallels and inserts, you have a nightmare for many collectors.

On average, each box should yield four autographs or relics with one being guaranteed to be a relic. The one set that is mind-boggling is Platinum Patches (as seen in this break). All the cards in this series are supposed to be patches, yet the cards are unnumbered. For many years, what has helped to make patch cards more valuable and special is the fact they are limited and collectors know how limited by the serial number. Now Panini changes the game and makes them seem like an ordinary jersey card, which ironically is serial numbered in Prestige.

All in all, Prestige is Panini's first release of the football collecting season and is more of a "get your feet wet" type of product. It encompasses the collecting habits of almost everyone in one fashion or another. The base set is set up to make the veteran portion fairly easy, but the rookies a challenge (which is how it should be). There are enough insert sets to make your head spin and barely any are numbered, so there's no telling how many are proliferating the market. There is a great mix of rookies and veterans in the "hit" pool which provides a good value at the price point among the other cards you get. But this is definately not a must-have type of product.

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Panini for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all their products, visit them today at www.paniniamerica.net.



Product Review: 2011 Topps Gypsy Queen Baseball

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Description

24 packs per box

10 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$159.99 - \$179.99

2011 Topps Gypsy Queen Baseball

Topps updates N147 Gypsy Queen with vibrantly colored, elegantly designed base cards, relic and autograph cards, original art cards, printing plates, stamp relic cards, and a unique box loader concept!



Issued in 1887, the N174 Gypsy Queen baseball card set featured sepia images of over 130 baseball players of the era on elegantly designed cards. Topps modernizes the original with vibrantly colored base cards, relic and autograph cards, original art cards, printing plates, and Gypsy Queen inserts!

Each 24-Count Hobby Box Contains

- 2 Autograph Cards
- 2 Relic Cards
- One 10-Card Mini Box Loader

What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=146iTp3Z2n4>

Base: 184/300 (61.3%)

SPs: 6/50 (12%)

Future Stars (6)

The Great One (6)

Gypsy Queens (1)

Home Run Heroes (6)

Framed Paper /999 (6): Jim Palmer, Christy Mathewson,

Hanley Ramirez, Carlos Gonzalez, Dale Murphy,

Red Schoendienst





- Mini (23)
- Mini SP Variation (1): Johan Santana
- Mini Black (2)
- Mini Red Gypsy Queen Back (4)
- Mini The Great Ones (1)
- Mini Home Run Heroes (1)
- Mini Future Stars (1)
- Mini Sepia /99 (1): Mark Teixeira



Evan Longoria Auto



Evan Longoria Mini Framed Jersey



Alex Rodriguez Jersey



Final ratings

- Base - 4/5
- Design - 4.5/5
- Fun - 4/5
- Value - 2.5/5
- Rebuy - 2.5/5

- Total - 17.5/25 (70%)



Gypsy Queen continues a trend by Topps to release sets that bring a product idea from generations ago to today. It contains a 350-card base set, 50 of which are short prints running on average of 1 in every 4 packs. The border has an old paper quality look and the players are featured in a picture window reminiscent of what you would see used in actual windows back in the late 1800s. All subjects are shown as painted representations.

There are many parallels of each of the base cards. Three Framed Border versions (not including the printing plates) can be found. On top to that, each card has six mini versions, including a short print variation of the regular base mini. Each pack will yield a mini card. There is a box loader that contains 10 additional mini cards (6 regular, 1 SP Variation, 3 Inserts).

Three chase sets encompassing the past, present and future of baseball are represented in 3 out of every 4 packs. A fourth set is devoted to actual gypsy queens from around the world. These usually appear once per box. And for "money" card enthusiasts, you will find three autographs or relics in every box on average.

The design work and picture quality of Gypsy Queen is magnificent. The painted images give a true-to-life portrayal of all the subjects. However, I can't help but feel this is nothing more than Allan & Ginter revisited. I cannot see the need to release virtually the same type of set twice in the same year. In addition, the price point is brutal. It is in borderline high-end territory and Gypsy Queen certainly is not a high-end product. If this was the only product of its kind, I could see collectors flocking to it. But being basically a rehash, you will probably find more enjoyment and value with Allen & Ginter and get the same amount of return.

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, visit them today at www.topps.com.



TOPPS



Product Review: 2010-2011 Panini Classics Basketball

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Description

18 packs per box

8 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): 74.99 - 84.99

Box break

- 2 Autographs (including 1 Autographed Rookie #'d/699 or less) and 2 Memorabilia Cards per Box
- At Least 1 Legend (#'d/999) per Box
- At Least 12 Inserts per Box



Highlights

- Find at least one of these Autographs per case: Kevin Durant, Kobe Bryant, Blake Griffin, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Oscar Robertson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Jerry West, Bill Walton, Brandon Jennings, Tyreke Evans, Amar'e Stoudemire, John Wall
- Look for at least one on-card Autographed Rookie (#'d to 699 or less) per box!
- Significant Signatures (#'d to 99 or less) feature the ink marks of current stars and some prime - time players from the past
- Classic Combos Jerseys Prime feature prime swatches of materials from some of the game's great duos
- Back by popular demand: Blast from the Past Signature Jerseys (#'d to 25 or less)
- 180-Card Base Set includes 100 Commons, 40 Legends (#'d/999), 40 Autographed Rookies (max #'d/699)

What we pulled

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0WwIsgdqz0

Base: 100/100 (100%)

Dupes: 27

Legends /499 (1): Michael Finley

Timeless Tributes Silver /250 (1): Robert Horry

Timeless Tributes Platinum /25 (1): David West





- Blast From The Past (5)
- Classic Combos (1)
- Classic Moments (1)
- Classic Greats (1)
- Classic Greats Gold /100 (1): Artis Gilmore (001/100)
- Dress Code (2)

Luke Babbitt Auto /699



Patrick Patterson Auto /449



Membership Scottie Pippen Jersey /499



Membership David West Jersey /499





Final ratings

Base - 5/5
Design - 4/5
Fun - 4/5
Value - 4.5/5
Rebuy - 4/5

Total - 21.5/25 (86%)

Year in and year out, Classics strive to merge the old and the new. While there are 100 cards devoted to veterans in the base set, there are also 40 legends and 40 rookies that comprise the master base set. The Legends are numbered to 999 and the rookies are autographs numbered to 699 or less. The base cards are designed so that even a myopic person knows the jersey number of the player featured on the front. Getting a complete veteran set is always a plus!

Do you enjoy putting various sets within a set together? Then this is for you. Classics has five insert sets and there are parallel versions to hunt as well. On top of that, each box yields 2 autographs (one guaranteed to be a rookie) and 2 relics on average. There is a nice mix of players within these confines, from retired to rookies.

All in all, Classics delivers on what you would expect the name to imply. Though I am hard-pressed to agree with what constitutes a "Legend" in the eyes of Panini. If it's just a general term to refer to a retired player, then just use "Retired". To me, Legend refers to those individuals who were a household name when they actively playing. Take that minor part away, Classics is an enjoyable product with a lot to offer to all the various types of collectors. Each pack contains some sort of bonus outside of base and that just doesn't happen much anymore.

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Panini for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all their products, visit them today at www.paniniamerica.net.



Product Review: 2011 Press Pass Premium Racing

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Description

20 packs per box

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): 74.99 - 84.99

Featuring One Autograph Card & One Race-Used Firesuit Card Per Box!



Press Pass Premium Delivers All of the New 2011 Uniforms & Paint Schemes!

Suit Up For An Exciting Nascar Season With 2011 Press Pass Premium!

Collect The First Trading Cards Featuring Nascar Drivers In Their 2011 Firesuits, And Look For Authentic Autographs And Race-Used Memorabilia In Every Box.

Each Hobby Box Features a Pair of 3D Glasses and at least One 3D Trading Card!

What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggHHYm7K30Y>

Base: 85/90 (94.4%)

Dupes: 6

SP (1): Kurt Busch





Crystal Ball (2)
 Hot Pursuit (4)
 NASCAR HOF (1)



David Reutimann Premium Auto /178

Each box comes with a pair of 3D glasses!



Carl Edwards Hot Threads 2-color Patch /25





Final rating

Base - 4.25/5

Design - 4.75/5

Fun - 3/5

Value - 3/5

Rebuy - 3/5

Total - 18/25 (72%)

Premium has resurfaced for another year. With a 90-card base set and 10 short prints, this is Press Pass' first opportunity to highlight events from the 2011 season. Actually, there's a real focus in regards to Daytona with subsets such as 500 Club, Draft Pick and NASCAR Preseason Thunder.

The design work is well-done, even though the first 36 cards are basically a copy of an insert design from a year or two ago, minus the foil. However, there's a bad taste that resonates in your mouth when you discover that a complete set does not exist in the box. It wouldn't be that awful until you consider the number of duplicates found in the box. There was a time when most Press Pass releases would yield a complete base set, but it appears times have changed. Could very well be a ploy to entice customers to buy more than one box.

In each box there is a pair of 3-D glasses. It states on the box that you can relive the Daytona 500 in 3-D via their website. But if you are not careful, you will miss that there is another use for them. One of the insert sets titled Hot Pursuit is designed to be viewed using the glasses. Without that knowledge, it looks like the cards were created using a cheap inkjet printer.

With two insert sets (not including the HOF set) and a fairly cut and dry base set, Premium is a quick and easy master set to build. While the 10 short prints make things a bit difficult, it is not one you will go crazy trying to complete. However, with just one autograph and one relic, it is hard to justify the price point.

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Press Pass for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For information on all their products, visit them today at www.presspassinc.com.



Uncle Jim

By SGT Jason aka Greenevansj

I have been collecting cards for 25 years now. I remember buying packs at drug stores when I was little, they couldn't have been more than \$1.00 back then. Even though I was really young, I guess I would have been categorized as a casual collector. I had cards strewn everywhere in my room. I had no organization whatsoever. Although I really enjoyed looking at cards and reading the stats on the back, they just weren't really that important to me. I enjoyed baseball, don't get me wrong, but the cards were secondary at the time. Then a moment came that changed not only my entire life but, my whole card collecting experience.

My Aunt and Uncle lived in New York when I was a kid. Even though they lived in White Plains, when you're a young kid from North Carolina, everyone in New York lives in Manhattan. In my mind my uncle Jim actually lived right next door to the stadium. We finally visited them when I was about 12 years old. It wasn't a vacation that brought us to New York. My cousin Jimmy had died. We were all hurting extremely bad. The drive to New York was not very pleasant and the whole funeral/visitation situation was not ideal for a 12-year-old's first visit to New York. I was hurting. I didn't know how to deal with the loss of my favorite cousin, I had never lost anyone. I can only imagine how it must have been for my aunt and uncle.

After a few days, the funeral was over. We all sat around, lost. I reckon that it was pretty hard for my uncle Jim to even talk to another little boy after he had just lost his. That didn't stop him, though. We began to talk about the Yankees while watching TV one day. That led to a discussion about Don Mattingly, my favorite player in the world. Before I knew it, there was a little bit of light back in Uncle Jim's eyes. For the first time during the entire trip I was distracted from my thoughts of Jimmy, and that was a good thing.

Uncle Jim went into his den and came out with a book. He asked me if I had ever collected baseball cards. I told him that I liked buying them but, that I didn't have any books or anything. He seemed almost appalled when explained my organization system of throwing them all in a drawer. I told him that I did have all of my Mattingly cards on my bookshelf, because they were my favorites. He asked if I knew any other Yankees, mainly Yankees from the past. At my answer of no, it became his mission to teach me everything I would need to make it; not only in the baseball world but, in the card collecting world.

He started out by showing me his shelf of favorite things. It was a little more elaborate than my shelf. His contained several Mickey Mantle and Joe Dimaggio cards, in hard plastic cases. He also had baseballs autographed by many different Yankees. Needless to say, I was enthralled. Not only did he explain to me what each of the things was but, why the person was so important. When he explained the importance of the players, he explained their importance to the game of baseball itself, not just the Yankees. I began to realize that baseball had an amazing history. The cards I was collecting were my little link to that history. They weren't just cool looking pieces of cardboard; they were historical documents of the most wonderful game that our great country had to offer.



Uncle Jim explained to me where his cards came from. He told me about all of the cards that he had owned since he was my age. He explained how he was able to keep them in such amazing condition; it wasn't by throwing them all in a drawer together. He showed me his autographed baseballs. He explained to me where he got each of them. He showed me the finger prints the players had accidentally left in the ink. He showed me the Mickey Mantle autographed ball that he got at the Mick's restaurant while he was eating. He told me about meeting each of his idols and what they were like as people. Uncle Jim's face lit up when he told me about all of them. We got so caught up in enjoying his collection together that we lost track of where we were or what time it was. Someone walked in and said that the priest was here to visit. We were both snapped back into reality.

My dad took me to a lot of ball games when I was young but, I can honestly say that my love of baseball came from my uncle Jim. My obsession with collecting baseball cards and memorabilia began during that trip to New York as well. Like I said, I was already collecting but, I needed that guiding hand to explain to me why I was collecting. Before we left for the drive back to North Carolina, uncle Jim took me back into his den. I thought it was just so that we could say goodbye but, he wanted to give me something. It was a baseball in a cube. Mickey Mantle had signed it but, what uncle Jim really wanted to point out was the barbecue sauce on the ball. Even more than the autograph, that barbecue sauce was his connection to his hero. Not many people get to meet their hero in their lives and Uncle Jim had. After my trip to New York, I knew that I too had met my hero.





Remembering the Madness By **Richard McAdam aka RGM81**

The news hit me very hard. I just stared at the monitor for a couple of minutes trying to digest the words that were flashed on the screen. Usually when I have something newsworthy in front of me I pass it along to the closest person available for a quick discussion. For some reason, with this one, the words could not come to my mouth for several minutes. All I could do was stare at the screen with my mouth slightly agape.

“Macho Man” Randy Savage Killed in Car Accident

Hearing of a professional wrestler passing away before his time is, sadly, not an infrequent occurrence. Many of the great stars that have entertained us in the past twenty years have gone to that great ring in the sky at a far too young age. While a bit of a sensationalist statistic, more than 25% of the performers at WrestleMania VII are no longer with us. Those modern-day gladiators gave their bodies and their lives to entertain us, and while they receive great adulation for it, it takes an incredible toll. The life of a professional wrestler has a tendency to be like the state of nature: nasty, brutish, and short. It is an ongoing tale of sadness to think of those who have passed away while still in the prime of their youth.

Randy Savage was one of my favourite wrestlers when I was navigating through childhood. While some people were thoroughly wrapped up in Hulkamania or The Ultimate Warrior, two men that had a truckload of charisma but a thimbleful of wrestling talent, Savage was an incredible storyteller.



He had ample flash, no doubt about that, but he was one of the more athletic wrestlers in an era of big men. He wrestled four matches at WrestleMania IV en route to capturing his first WWF Title, each against a distinct opponent. He could cut a quick pace in his matches, and the story arc of those matches had tremendous psychology. You need to look no deeper than his legendary WrestleMania III encounter with Ricky “The Dragon” Steamboat to see what an amazing storyteller Savage was in the ring. It is a testament to both men that nearly 25 years after the encounter, many wrestling aficionados still

hail that match as the greatest of all time.

When one thinks of Randy Savage, one often thinks also of Miss Elizabeth. Their on-screen story remains professional wrestling’s only true fairy tale. They had their ups and downs over the years, largely fuelled by the Macho King’s jealousy of other men staring at his valet. When Savage turned on Hulk Hogan and went heel, they would be kayfabe estranged for several years. Savage would then take on Sensational Sherri as his new Queen, further fuelling the fans against the once-popular Macho Man.



Like any good fairy tale, this one would have to have a happy end based on redemption and true love.



At WrestleMania VII, Savage would face The Ultimate Warrior in a retirement match. It would turn out that the aftermath dwarfed even the fantastic match itself in terms of creating a long-lasting memory. Savage used every tool in his arsenal but could not hold down the Warrior. He delivered five consecutive top-roped elbow drops, which would have been enough to vanquish any man. Still, the Warrior kicked out, channelled the energies of the little warriors, and ultimately pinned Savage. Furious at being newly out of a job, Sherri turned on Savage, attacking him in the ring until the normally demure Elizabeth jumped the rail and rescued her man.

The reunion years in the making came to fruition, and Savage, who had entered the ring the villain exited it a triumphant hero. Many in the arena had tears in their eyes, underscoring once again the incredible level of psychological attachment that Savage could inspire from the crowds.

Even though he was forced into retirement, Savage was not immune from the taunting of Ric Flair, who produced “doctored” photos of him with Miss Elizabeth and claimed that she had been his before she was Savage’s and was thus “damaged goods.” I remember being a youngster and actually owning the copy of WWF Magazine in which the photos were published – it was a month later that the “real” photos of Randy & Liz in the exact same poses were revealed. Savage would have to beg President Jack Tunney for reinstatement to defend the honour of his bride (the two were married on-screen in the “Match Made in Heaven” at SummerSlam 1991), which was ultimately granted, setting the stage for a WWF Championship Match at WrestleMania VIII and the Macho Man’s second title reign.

Those are my great memories of Macho Man Randy Savage. I didn’t really follow his career in WCW, as I was never really much of a fan of that promotion. I know that he had four World Title reigns there but I don’t know much beyond that. He will forever be remembered for his athleticism, amazing ring psychology, fantastic matches, and Miss Elizabeth. He was truly one of the greatest wrestlers of his era, and while it was an ongoing shame that he was never inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame because of his issues with Vince McMahon, he absolutely deserves the award posthumously. Ohhhhhh yyyyyeeeahhhhh!



Hockey Update

By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

After eight months and over 100 games played each, the Vancouver Canucks and the Boston Bruins are the only two teams left standing in the NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs hunt. In what promises to be an excellent series, one team will emerge victorious and hold aloft the greatest prize in all of professional sports. It is said that the Stanley Cup is the hardest trophy to win, and the fortunes of the two combatants seems to emphasize that point. This is the third time in the Canucks' 40-year history that they have made it to the Finals; in their previous appearances in 1982 and 1994, they came up short, most painfully in 1994 by just one game. Though the Bruins have won 2 Stanley Cups, this is their first appearance in the Finals since 1990, when they were swept by the Edmonton Oilers. For one team, a long draught will come to an end.

Throughout the playoffs, SCF has had two excellent contests running for its VIP members. Both contests have been sponsored by Panini and the opportunity to win some spectacular 1/1 cards has been seized upon by several members.

The first is a predictor contest to win this Patrick Kane 1/1:



The second is for this Carey Price 1/1:



Both races will go right down to the wire, so good luck to all of the participants, and thank you to Panini for providing SCF with these great giveaway cards!



The end of the hockey season means that it is high-end hockey card product time on the release calendar! After a bit of a lull in the past month or so, June has a very full slate of releases for collectors, as all three companies ramp up their efforts to bring you some great cards. Here is the schedule for releases in the month of June:

In The Game Decades - 1980s – June 3, 2011 -- Discussion Thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1300691>

Panini Box Set - All Goalies - June 8, 2011 - Discussion Thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1380823>

Upper Deck Ultimate Collection - June 14, 2011 -- Discussion Thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1276484>

Panini Zenith - June 22, 2011 - Discussion Thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1333144>

Panini Luxury Suite - June 29, 2011 -- Discussion Thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1338875>

Panini Box Set - Score Rookies & Traded - June 29, 2011 - Discussion Thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1380817>

Upper Deck is also rumoured to be putting together a box set commemorating the Stanley Cup Champions should it end up being the Vancouver Canucks. More details as they come available.

We would like to congratulate one of our very lucky members for an exceptional pull from one of his box breaks. Mugmasher was fortunate enough to pull a Taylor Hall Golden Ticket 1/1 from his break of Panini Contenders. The card is made from 14K gold! Congratulations on the pull of a lifetime!

With all of the excitement surrounding the sport and the hobby right now, there is unfortunately one piece of bad news that we have to report. Due to an ongoing labour dispute, Canada Post's 50,000 unionized employees have announced their intent to strike as they have been unable to come to a new CBA with the Corporation. This will result in some delays in delivery, and unfortunately will have a severe effect on trading around the boards. We can only hope that the strike is settled very quickly to minimize the time lost. If you have outstanding trades we counsel patience. If you enter into any trade talks please keep in mind that mail is not being delivered through Canada Post, and you may have to seek alternative arrangements.

That aside, enjoy the Stanley Cup Finals and all of the new products that will be arriving on the market! See you around the boards!



All Worthy: A Review of the 2nd Class of the NASCAR Hall of Fame and Who Should Be Next...

By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy



Later this month, in fact right before this issue is released, 5 new gentlemen will cement their place in the echelons of Nascar greats by being enshrined into the Nascar Hall of Fame. The first class, enshrined last year, featured the so-called Mount Rushmore of Nascar-Bill France Sr. (the founder), Bill France Jr., (the leader and visionary), Richard Petty (Nascar's all-time winningest driver), Junior Johnson (the true pioneer), and Dale Earnhardt (the sport's greatest Legend). This year's class also contains 5 names that should be familiar to most fans of the sport, but to other non-followers these men might not be as familiar. The following is a short synopsis of each of these great men and why they are going into the Hall of Fame this year:

Bobby Allison

With 84 wins in his career, Bobby Allison is tied for the third winningest driver in Nascar history. He also claimed the Cup Championship in 1983. A simple man who became the leader of The Alabama Gang, Allison was one of the hardest-nosed racers in Nascar history and was a key player in perhaps Nascar's biggest moment, the 1979 fight in the infield at the Daytona 500. Allison today is still present in the Nascar fan's public eye so his notoriety remains strong. Having lost both of his sons in accidents a year apart from each other (Clifford in a Nascar crash and Davey in a helicopter crash), Allison is the picture of strength and courage (he also battled and recovered from life threatening injuries and brain damage himself after a 1988 crash at Pocono). He has remained loyal to the sport he loved his whole life despite what it took away from him. Allison is going into the Hall of Fame due to his devotion, his kindness, and his driving. A true racer.



Ned Jarrett

Known as gentlemen Ned, Jarrett had a great driving career amassing 50 career wins and 2 championships before retiring after only 13 years of competition. Most modern fans know him due to his brilliant work as an announcer for many years on Nascar broadcasts on television and as the father of 1999 Nascar champion Dale Jarrett. Behind the wheel Jarrett was a great competitor who raced not for the glory but to keep his family fed. Perhaps the smartest racer in Nascar history, Jarrett took care of his car better than anyone, as his most well known victory proved. (Jarrett won the Southern 500 at Darlington on an atrociously hot day by 14 laps by taking care of his car while others broke). A man of great faith and kindness, Jarrett is among the most respected men to ever drive and hold a microphone in the world of Nascar.

Bud Moore

Bud Moore served as a car owner in the sport of Nascar for 37 straight years. He amassed 63 wins, 43 poles, and 3 Cup Championships as an owner. Although the statistics are solid, Moore meant so much more to Nascar and so much more to even this country. A simple man from Spartanburg, South Carolina, Moore is a decorated World War II veteran who in fact stormed the beaches on June 6th, 1944 at Normandy for the United States. Working under the direct command of general George Patton he received 2 Bronze Stars and 5 Purple Hearts for his efforts in the War. After coming back to the United States Moore set about his career in Nascar. His expert skills as a mechanic and as a leader shown through. He provided countless drivers with their first opportunities in the Cup Series and was a staple in the garage for countless years. Moore's importance to the sport is vast and wide ranging, from both the ownership and the mechanical side. He is most definitely deserving.

David Pearson

Many will tell you (me included) that David Pearson is the best driver to ever sit behind the wheel of a stock car, not Richard Petty or Dale Earnhardt. Amassing 3 championships, 105 career victories and 113 career poles, the Silver Fox's win percentage remains the best all-time when compared with starts made. Blindingly quick and very smooth, Pearson provided Richard Petty his main competition throughout his career. On statistics alone Pearson more than likely deserved to be in the first class of the Hall of Fame but was left the odd man out. He rightfully received the highest amount of votes to go in this class.

Lee Petty

One of the true pioneers of the sport, Lee Petty won 54 races and 3 championships during a great driving career. The patriarch who laid the groundwork of what would become the winningest team in



Nascar history in Petty Enterprises, Lee was a hard nosed no nonsense person who loved to win (he spun his son Richard out of the lead to win a race, and Richard to that point had not won yet). Petty is also famous for being the first winner of the Daytona 500 in 1959, a race that ended in a photo finish.

The Next 5...

There are many names to choose from when it comes to the 2012 class. These are my 5 choices.

1. Darrell Waltrip-with his statistics Waltrip is a virtual lock. Tied for 3rd with Bobby Allison on the all-time wins list and amassing 3 Cup Championships, Waltrip deserves to be there.
2. Cale Yarborough-probably the toughest Nascar driver of all-time, Yarborough was a 3-time consecutive champion from 1976-1978, a record that stood until Jimmie Johnson's recent dominance and is right behind Allison and Waltrip on the all-time wins list.
3. Dale Inman-an 8 time champion crew chief (most of them chiefting Petty's #43), Inman is the winningest crew chief of all-time and deserves to be the first one to go in.
4. Raymond Parks-a true pioneer, Parks was basically Nascar's first car owner and owned the car that won Nascar's first championship. He was also influential in getting Nascar started in the first place alongside Bill France.
5. Fireball Roberts-Nascar's first true superstar, Roberts was an unbelievable driver who we lost way too early. His personality and driving style transcended the sport in the early 1960's.





PWE? Say it Isn't So!

By Kevin O'Connor aka rainman67ko

I am an advisor or moderator on the SCF Disputes Team. I will be writing articles related to the Disputes process, best trading practices, and online trading execution, which is the follow through after the trade is confirmed and completed.

This month I am going to address the topic of sending a trade via PWE (plain white envelope). Online trading is bigger than ever. Internet forums, eBay, live streaming video, and social media outlets have increased exposure to the hobby and provided more options for traders than have ever existed before.

Ever received a PWE trade and been amazed by the condition the card was in? The source of this amazement can range from that associated with relief that it survived to disgust with the sender because the card was damaged. Today's automated mail sorting equipment is not friendly to cards, and top loaders, in envelopes.

That being said, a PWE is a perfectly acceptable way to send cards, of little value, to a trader who is expecting them to come in PWE. Once again communication is critical. Your trade partner needs to agree to this shipping method. This is often done for base singles. The card can be shipped for the cost of a stamp. I still suggest a SS/TL/TB or another method of protection. Another method of protection to help a PWE is making the envelope a little bulky. Part of a recycled bubble mailer or crumpled paper can help ensure the envelope receives hand processing. While it's nice to write "DO NOT BEND" on the outside, it does little, or nothing to actually protect what's inside.



PWE are often used for TTM (through the mail) autograph requests. This allows one to include an SASE (self addressed stamped envelope) and control costs as the risk of receiving nothing in return is high.

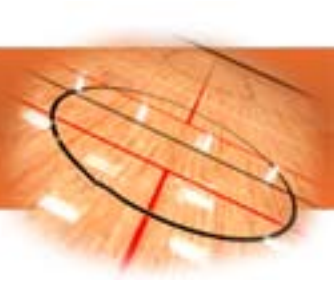
In summary make sure you communicate to your trade partner if you wish to send via PWE. Include this information in the description field of the Trade Manager. Don't gamble with your trader's reputation or your partner's cards, just by being cheap. If the card's value dictates better protection, you the sender, are responsible to provide such protection.



Check trader feedback before you confirm any trades. Always assess the risk associated with the value you are sending. When building your reputation try to do some smaller or low value trades and get the hang of things.

Please contact me on SCF with any questions regarding the SCF Disputes process or trading execution and I will try to answer immediately. I may also incorporate ideas into future articles published here in the Sports Card Forum magazine.





Basketball Happenings **By Jay Weger aka Jay520**

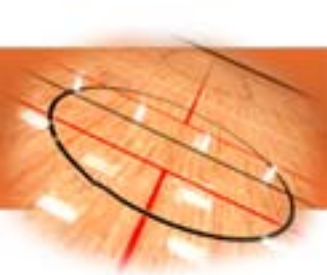
Contests and Winners

In May the NBA Top Performers contest moved into the playoffs format where there is eliminations in each round. toddsr was eliminated in the first round with 0 points. The 2nd round saw Thrillseeker eliminated because he had the lowest amount of points. And finally AiThor and tylermckinzie were both out in the 3rd round because of a tie at the bottom of the standings. The final 5 remaining and getting a shot at the prizes are JesRey(50 pts), jdlee123(47 pts), rocketfan86(47 pts), tk10775(46 pts) and tjvisco(44 pts). The prizes will be given out when the NBA Playoffs come to an end with 1st place getting 2009-10 Topps Signatures Autograph Dennis Rodman /1299, 2nd 2009-10 Bowman '48 Autograph Andrew Bynum, and 3rd 2005-06 Topps Finishing Touch Jersey Yao Ming. Now onto the NBA GTS contests for May thru 5/30 JesRey is leading 21 wins. 2FarGone, dwighthoward and abah58 are tied in 2nd with 12 wins each and andrewhoya in 3rd with 9. For the VIP members JesRey is on top with 28 wins, andrewhoya – 20, pwaldo – 16, gladdyontherise – 15, lil5up3rman -14. Theme Weeks saw some awesome cards submitted in May. Week #6 was dual auto which saw MeloJrsyCllctr win. #7 was dual patch and saw realreodeal get the most votes. #8 was best die-cut card which was won by adadas101 with a nice Kobe insert. #9 cards #rd to players jrsy # won by de deluxe. Ad Week # 10 was Letterman autos that was won by Ojmayo32. So if you think you have the cards to win please check out the Show & Tell section of the basketball forums. GUESS the serial # was started this month by XxViSiOnxX for the playoffs. If you GUESS the correct # you get a point to try to win the prizes at the end of the NBA Finals. So far there has been 15 rounds with vixsportscards with 5 points, 2nd is tk10775 with 4, udeckcoll and fitchjr is tied for 3rd with 3 points. The Prizes are Tyreke Evans 10/11 Prestige Franchise Favorites GU, Carmelo Anthony/Gilbert Arenas 09/10 UD Combo GU, and Tracy McGrady 08/09 Fleer Genuine Coverage GU. First place gets to choose then second chooses and third get the remaining card. So be sure to check out the contests area to try to win!!

NBA Playoffs

The first round of the NBA Playoffs came to an end in the beginning of the month when the Bulls won the series over the Pacers in 5 games. Also in the east Miami finished off the 76ers in 5 games. Boston swept the Knicks in 4. Then Atlanta found a way to contain the outside shooters of Orlando and won the series 4-2. In the west after New Orleans tied the series at 2-2 the Lakers won the next 2 games to win the series 4-2. That was the same case in the Dallas/Portland series. OKC needed just 5 games to beat the Nuggets to move on to round 2. And finally with the biggest upset in a few years the Memphis Grizzlies won the series 4-2 beating the no. 1 seed in the west San Antonio Spurs.

With the first round over the Bulls met the Hawks in the next round where Derrick Rose was awarded the league MVP and Tom Thibodeau was named Coach of the Year. Atlanta shocked the bulls and won game 1 but Chicago regained their composure and won the series 4-2 with a blowout win in



game 6. Miami played Boston in the east semis that had lost the regular season 3-1. The Heat won the first 2 at home but Boston got 1 back at home in game 3. Game 4 Miami won to put Boston down 3-1. Miami then finished the series at home in game 5 with James closing the game out with big shots in the final minutes. The second round in the west saw a sweep and a 7 games series. OKC and Memphis were the teams that put on a good 7 game series which saw a triple ot game in the matchup. Mike Conley and Zach Randolph pushed the Thunder to a game 7 by tying the series at 3-3. OKC was able to finish the series 4-3 with a big game from Durant and Westbrook who had a triple-double in game 7. Dallas and the Lakers faced off in the other series. The Mavs won the first 2 games in L. A. to go up 2-0. Many analysts and fans did not give up on the Lakers still believing they would win the series. Game 3 Dallas beat the Lakers 98-92 to go up 3-0 over the defending champs. Game 4 Dallas got extremely hot from 3 point range with Terry hitting 9 3's and Stojakovic 7 3's for a blowout win 122-86 and ending the Lakers chances of a 3-peat. The Lakers looked old and tired against the Mavs and it showed as they were swept 4-0.

The East Finals got underway with the Bulls taking game 1 103-82 over the Heat. Chicago played a great second half to earn a game 1 lead. That was short lived as Miami won the next 2 games. Game 4 went in to OT with the Heat winning 101-93. Chicago put up a great fight but was too fatigued to do anything in the OT. Game 5 in Chicago the Bulls blew a 10 point lead in the final minutes as Lebron and Wade closed out the game and series 4-1 over Chicago. In the West Finals the matchup was Dallas vs OKC. Dallas took the first game 121-112 on Dirk's 48 points (24-24 ft new NBA playoff record). Durant and Russell Westbrook came back and won game 2 for OKC 106-100. Dallas stopped their momentum by winning game 3 in OKC. In games 4 and 5 OKC had 4th quarter leads but could not hold on to either as the Mavs went on runs to send game 4 into ot to win and game 5 to clinch the series 4-1.

So the NBA Finals will see a rematch of ht 06 Finals with the Miami Heat going head-to-head against the Dallas Mavericks. Can the combination of Wade/James/Bosh be too much for Dirk/Kidd/Terry to overcome for Dallas or will the 06 defeat be dirk's motivation to bring a ring back to Dallas? NBA Finals start 5/31/11 on ABC.

Pack/Box breaks

The new product this month was definitely 10-11 SP Authentic!! There were several nice cards pulled on the forum. Starting with Atrain81 who pulled an Erick Bledsoe letterman auto/149, Ed Davis RC GU, Damon James letterman auto/149, MJ Supreme Court floor card from 1 box and 5 packs. dauber01 got 2 boxes and got a Jack Sickma auto, Derrick Rose letterman redeem./149, MJ Supreme Court floor, and a MJ SOTT auto. caseboxbreakers broke a box and pulled a MJ Supreme Court floor card plus a Lebron James auto. luckyrollers busted 8 boxes to get a MJ auto and James auto. ColtsD21 got 2



letterman autos one of Griervis Vasquez and Jim Jackson/149 from a couple packs. saints247 got a great hit in a MJ Supreme Court floor auto 1/5 rare. Flashie007 opened 2 boxes getting some nice GU and landing a MJ Supreme Court floor auto 3/5 uncommon. eddiekyf got a MJ auto from 2 boxes he opened. leedawg62 pulled 2 letterman autos and hit a MJ Supreme Court floor auto 5/5 common. ronfir opened 1 box and 15 pack of another box nabbing a Derrick Rose letterman redeem./149, MJ Supreme Court floor card and a MJ Supreme Court floor auto 5/5 common. hardaway21 got just 3 packs and hit a Bob Huggins auto and a MJ Supreme Court floor card. skeen got a MJ floor card on only 3 packs too. 10-11 SP Authentic proved to be a huge success with collectors netting many MJ floor cards and autos!

10-11 Absolute Memorabilia was still big this month with many nice hits. telicious got a Jazz team trios Williams/Kirilenko/Jefferson GU/100, Daniel Orton RPM /499, Mark Price jumbo GU/49 and a Kobe auto/25 from a box. Quigley24 pulled a Jeremy Lin RPM/499, Rondo/PieRCe dua GU/100 from 1 pack. Atrain81 got a Vasquez RPM/499, Dwight Howard jumbo GU/99, LeBron jumbo GU/49, and a Rondo auto/10. strum314 got a Boston quad GU of Allen/Garnett/PieRCe/Rondo/100, Carmelo Anthony GU/49, Derrick Favors RPM/499, and a John Wall RPM redm./499. kardkid74 came in second in a Panini contest and got a free box and pulled a Chris Kaman auto/99, Penny Hardaway GU/99, Steve Nash patch/25. hairyangryfella did better by pulling a Warriors dual GU of Lee/Curry/100, Rudy gay GU/49, and this sweet Blake Griffin auto/99.

Some other Panini products that were opened were 2 boxes of 09-10 Studio by clayqian who got a Curry RC auto, Jennings RC auto, Kobe GU, and Blake Griffin GU. clayqian also opened a box of 09-10 Court Kings and hit a Curry box topper auto. Quigley24 hit a Joe Dumars auto/25 from only 4 packs of 10-11 Donruss. BizzyDesigner hit a Johnny Flynn auto/49 from 1 10-11 Donruss rack pack. adadas101 hit a Blake Griffin GU fro a few packs of 10-11 Classics. Tjvisco opened a box of 10-11 Threads getting a Kelly Tripuka auto/25, Steve Nash/50 and a John Wall RC GU/399. jball50 hit a Kareem Abdul-Jabbar auto /50 from 09-10 Panini Hall of Fame.

Some 07-08 stuff was opened looking for Durant RC's and 08-09 stuff for Rose RC's too.austin209 hit a Durant RC from 07-08 Ultra from a retail mixed box. Spuds1961 got a Durant RC from 1 pack of 07-08 Topps. Najera opened 4 packs of 08-09 Topps and found a unique hit in an Obama card(bv\$60). daners7576 opened a box of 08-09 Topps to find 2 Rose RC and a Derrick Rose/Michael Beasley Rookie photo shoot red dual auto. jprt80 opened 7 packs of 08-09 Skybox to find a Telfair ruby/50, Rose Metal Universe RC, Farmar auto, and Kobe/Garnett dual GU. And lastly tjvisco opened 2 boxes of 08-09 Topps Hardwood to pull many RC's, 2 Roce RC's, billups GU/175, Bosh GU/175, TJ Ford aut/39, Josh Smith 3 color patch and a nice J.J. Hickson Fabrics signature patch/25.

Team news

garnett_21 left the team staff in late April. Staff says thanks for your help and presence while you were a part of the team. Also JordanFanatic has been added to the basketball staff just this week as a MIT.



If Scott Cousins Never Plays Another Game Again, We'll Be Happy

By Brad Wingate aka BBonds25

Those are not my sentiments, but a paraphrase of a statement Giants GM Brian Sabean gave to KNBR in San Francisco. He called the May 25th home plate collision between Cousins, a rookie outfielder for the Florida Marlins, and Giants star catcher Buster Posey “malicious”, and said that Cousins “chose to be a hero”.

OK. Maybe Cousins could've avoided the collision. He probably has enough room to slide around Posey. But, in a play like that, with adrenaline coursing through his veins, Cousins was probably concerned with scoring, even if it meant going through Posey to knock the ball loose. Hindsight is 20/20, so it's easy to critique the play after it happened. I chalk it up to a freak accident during a play that is part of the game. I assume Posey's teammates felt the same way, because while several of them huddled around their young catcher, none of them seemed to even look in Cousins direction, even as he was standing around the plate with them, looking onto Posey with them.

But now there is a debate about whether or not collisions at home plate should be outlawed. To that I say no way. It's as much a part of the game as a take out slide or a retaliation pitch. Every player who straps on the gear knows that there is a very good chance that they are going to be freight trained. But they also understand that the plate is theirs to protect, even if it means potential injury.



Last August, Boston outfielder Ryan Kalish and Indians Catcher Carlos Santana had a similar play in which Kalish slid into Santana's extended leg, causing a severe leg and knee injury, and ending his season. Kalish did not throw his shoulder into Santana, a la Cousins, but he could've used a hook slide to try to avoid the catcher. But, when this play occurred, there was no backlash against the Sox outfielder. Instead, it was an unfortunate accident.

In the 1970 All-Star Game, Pete Rose almost cut catcher Ray Fosse in half with what was recently called the top home plate collision in MLB history. This happened in a game that meant nothing more to the winning team than bragging rights for a year. The Cousins/Posey play was during the regular season, where 1 win could mean the difference in playing in September, or watching from home.



I applaud Cousins for playing the game with some intensity. I'm not happy that Posey got hurt (though I am glad he was not my starting catcher on any of my fantasy teams). But it's always refreshing to see a player who is not afraid to play the game the way it was played in the past. I'm fine with bringing instant replay to the game, but outlawing home plate collisions would be a huge mistake. If that's the case, Major League Baseball may as well change its name to the NFL. If MLB wants to do something positive for the game, how about finding a way to protect its fans so now one else will suffer what Bryan Stow has, just for being the fan of a rival team. That would do a lot more for the game than outlawing plate collisions.

One more thing; stay classy Brian Sabean. Stay classy.

Posey/cousins collision: http://mlb.mlb.com/video/play.jsp?content_id=15201655

Santana/KAlish collision: http://mlb.mlb.com/video/play.jsp?content_id=10545643

Rose/Fosse: http://mlb.mlb.com/video/play.jsp?content_id=13099647

Bryan Stow story: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/san-francisco-giants-fan-bryan-stow-coma-attacked/story?id=13298349>





60 Years of Topps Baseball; a Countdown

By Drew Pelto aka *censored*

Baseball cards are an American institution, almost as old as the game itself. And while they weren't the inventors of it, no single company represents the history of the hobby better than Topps. They kicked off the revolution in 1952 that made cards into what we see today, and they're still cranking out cards to this day. They pioneered all sorts of ideas in the industry— the good (adding stats to cards, using color photos instead of water color paintings, buying cards and getting gum as bonus instead of the other way around), and the bad (say it with me: Topps Gold and all the other parallel cards of the 90s and 00s), and even the ugly (3-D cards and the short-lived Topps Coins).

I can almost guarantee that if you're a collector reading this, you have multiple Topps items in your collections. Of course, the fact they had a near monopoly on the card industry from 1956-1980 helps that fact. And if you're Canadian, you probably have the Topps clone from the Great White North, O-Pee-Chee. And really now, who doesn't love O-Pee-Chee? Bilingual backs on white card stock instead of gray, an abundance of Expos cards, and updates of late trades and signings with a tag of "Now Playing for Baltimore" or whomever on the front a few cards. As just some kid in northeast Ohio, there was always something that felt so exotic about getting an O-Pee-Chee card in the pre-internet days when worldwide trading was almost impossible. Like some smuggler brought it over the border illegally, outrunning the Mounties through Leamington, swimming for three days across Lake Erie with the cards in a waterproof hefty bag strapped to his back, then smacking a customs agent across the face with a walleye and making a run for it once he reached Sandusky before finally getting the cards to me to hide in my collection and telling me exactly what to say when the FBI comes calling asking about the receipt of illegally obtained foreign goods. But I digress.

Think of all the iconic Topps cards out there. 1952, 1953, and 1967 Mickey Mantle. 1954 Aaron and Williams. 1956 Jackie Robinson. 1968 Nolan Ryan and Jerry Koosman. 1979 Ozzie Smith. 1982 Cal Ripken and the other two scrubs. 1983 Sandberg, Boggs, and Gwynn. 1985 McGwire. All those cards listing some guy named Bob Clemente while repeatedly leaving out his look-alike teammate Roberto (wait, what?). No one ever remembers any Fleer, Score, or Donruss cards like that. Even Upper Deck lacks the icons aside from the 1989 Griffey.

With 2011 being the 60th anniversary of Topps Baseball Cards as we know them, I am counting down each set from worst to best in a 60-installment series. New sets will be posted approximately every three days if all goes as I hope it will. So by somewhere around the end of the World Series, the series will come to its conclusion with the greatest Topps baseball card set of all time, the illustrious 1990 set.

Just kidding. 1990 makes me want to dig my eyes out with a fork, as you will soon find out. Spoiler: its ranked 58th out of the 60 sets.



image quality), player selection (whose rookie cards are in it and who's missing for whatever reason), iconic cards (those cards like 1952 Mantle or 1954 Aaron, where you can close your eyes and picture the card in your mind), and significance to the hobby (advances in the industry, new additions, or cards covering major happenings in the baseball world) and then put them in order from worst to best. I doubt there will be any major surprises to anyone familiar with the hobby; I think your lists would all be pretty similar to mine.

Also, it's strictly the base sets. No Traded, no Stadium Club, no Heritage, no Opening Day, nothing but just plain old Topps. Period. No additions to the end of that, it's Topps, Topps, and Topps.

It's time to salute 40 years of good cards with crappy gum, 15 years of "Sorry, we're too busy concentrating on competing with Upper Deck with glitz and glamor instead of substance," and 5 years of "OK, we'll start taking this seriously again." That is Topps baseball in a nutshell. It's time we celebrate it. Happy 60th, guys. I'm sure Sy Berger is smiling like a butcher's dog seeing his idea go this far.

Stay posted on the SCF articles site to read my take on 60 Topps set and enjoy a great summer of baseball!

About the Author: Drew Peltó, 27, is the play-by-play voice of the North American Hockey League's Wichita Falls Wildcats. He is a long-suffering Cleveland sports fan with an incredible load of emotional baggage from years of Shots, Fumbles, Drives, Chokes, Decisions, and general rudderless suck. He has been a sports card collector for 20 years. Drew resides in North Texas with his wife and a vast number of cats.





Wake Up the Echoes!!!

By Noah Foreman aka TrueIrishFan616

I decided to write about an event that changed the way I look at sports. I grew up in a small town about 15 miles east of South Bend, IN called Elkhart. My late father raised me to do 1 of 2 things: Play football for Notre Dame or play basketball for Notre Dame. There were no other options good enough for my dad. Being from Indiana and having a father that loved sports, I was taught at a very early age how to throw the perfect spiral and shoot the perfect jump shot. It turned out that I didn't throw very well on the run, and I would dribble off of my foot under pressure. I still played both in high school but only intramural style. It was very clear that I wasn't going to be playing for any university. It became a tradition with me and my dad on Saturday's to cook French toast in the morning, go outside and run some routes, then hurry back in by 2:30 to catch the Irish play. You see, from BIRTH I was shoved head first into loving Notre Dame football. My first baby bottle said "Future Irish" on the side. My first blanket was handmade by a woman in our church with a great big leprechaun in the middle. My first outfit as a toddler was a Notre Dame sweatsuit! I had no choice but to love everything that was and still is...Notre Dame.

The first memory I have of that awesome stadium was back in 1992. My dad had surprised me that morning with 2 tickets to Notre Dame's "Blue and Gold Game." It's just a fancy way of saying Spring Scrimmage. We loaded into the van with a fake ND helmet that used to be part of a lamp and headed into South Bend. We parked what seemed like 5 miles from the stadium, but that's probably inaccurate...I think I was just so revved up about getting to see this team play in person for the first time! I remember seeing all the people walking around dressed in blue or green or gold. Guys yelling out "Get your programs!" I couldn't wait to get in our seats. I don't have much of a memory of how the game actually went. But the event that really changed how I looked at Notre Dame was after the game ended. They allow people to come onto the field and meet the players. My dad and I ran down to the field and waited in the crowd around 1 player in particular. He was my favorite player. He had a great career at Notre Dame but was short lived in the NFL. He was drafted by the Seattle Seahawks where he rode the bench for most of the years he was there. He was then traded to the Chicago Bears where he rode out the rest of his career. Does anybody know who I'm talking about? His name is Rick Mirer. And I loved to watch that guy throw a football.

But it was that event...being down on that field where so many Notre Dame greats had played in front of 80,000 people that changed my views on Notre Dame football. I still get goose bumps thinking about it. Since that moment, I've focused most of my hard earned money on making my mark on Notre Dame collecting. I just started collecting cards thanks to SCF. And of course the first cards I see on the site were the new 2010 UD Exquisite collection. And they made quite a few prior ND greats. I had NO IDEA that cards had come so far! Pieces of jersey and helmet IN THE CARD?! I got to have these. \$3,000 later...I'm hooked! I collect as well as do my part to enrich others lives with one-of-a-kind ND figures. I take regular McFarlane football figures that you can buy pretty much buy anywhere and I



take some model paint and some decals and turn them into Notre Dame greats! I don't do it for money. I create these guys and give them away to fund raisers and charity events. I've been collecting anything Notre Dame for the past 10 years or so.

I'm a Notre Dame nut! I'm not however, a "typical" Notre Dame fan that I know most of you reading this assume I am. I don't sit at BBQ's talking about championships won 60 years before I was born. I'm a logical fan. I know that Notre Dame hasn't been very good for about 30 years. I know that the last championship they won was in 1988! But I also know that Notre Dame has a great tradition. That the university stands for excellence in education first and foremost. After all, these people are STUDENT-ATHLETES. I love Notre Dame football more than anything else in this world. I chew my nails off when it's a close game, I sit in anticipation when they're losing to teams they shouldn't be losing too, and my Saturday is ruined after a tough loss. But through thick and thin...I will always be a Notre Dame fan. Not because it's trendy to some, but because it's where my roots lye. It's in my blood.





My First Baseball Game By Bryan Veale aka RedsFanatic21

It was June 5, 1987. I was twelve years old, and my family was starting out on vacation for the summer. My parents had a habit of just taking off and not telling us kids where we were headed; this was one of those times. About one hour into our trip, they told us that we were going to Cincinnati to a Reds baseball game. I was a huge Reds and Eric Davis fan, so this was easily the best place in my eyes that we could spend our vacation. I was so excited that I felt physically sick. They had to pull over so I could...you know. Anyway after that I felt much better and started daydreaming about what it would be like.

We arrived in Cincinnati, went downtown to park, and walked around to find a place to eat. I could not concentrate on food at this point. I was too hyped up about getting to Riverfront Stadium. Several ticket scalpers stopped us, but my parents were determined to get tickets from the Reds ticket office despite my pleas to just get the tickets now. We waited in a short line to purchase our tickets for the night game against the Dodgers. It seemed like forever to me to be that close and not be able to go inside the stadium. So we finally got the tickets that we could have had downtown from the scalpers and headed through the gate.

My first look at the field was amazing. The turf looked super green in person. It was so much different to how it looked on television that it almost did not seem like the same place. The smell of hot dogs and popcorn filled the air. The players were taking batting practice. It was a perfect moment in my life. Everything that surrounded me formed the images and smells that I remember today as my first major league baseball game.

Once we got into the stadium, I got my score card and walked around a bit. We found our seats in the green seat level in the outfield. If you remember old Riverfront Stadium the lower level stopped at the foul lines, so all of the outfield seats, with the exception of a few lower level rows (blue seats) in right field, were second level green seats. So at this point I was trying to locate my favorite player; Eric Davis. He was having one of the greatest starts in baseball robbing homers defensively and cranking out bombs with his lightning quick bat. He was on the cover of Sports Illustrated. Everyone was proclaiming him the next Willie Mays. I have never seen a more electric player than Eric Davis when he was young and healthy. It is a shame injuries plagued his career.

After batting practice I found Eric Davis out running to get loose before the game. It was so cool to finally lay eyes on my baseball hero in person. The color of the Reds' white and red uniforms against that green turf painted a very colorful picture. I was very intent for the playing of the National Anthem. I had chills.

When the game finally began, I was in heaven. I was trying to look at everything at the same time to take it all in. There was so much to see that the first half inning was a blur. When the Reds came up to



but I was starting to settle in so I could enjoy the game. I was still excited but at least I could process the plays that were happening now. I was getting used to checking out the scoreboard between pitches. The game was starting to flow.

The Reds got behind early, but went ahead on a Davis three-run homer with two out in the seventh inning. I was going crazy. E.D. also added a couple of stolen bases making his night very satisfactory to me. The Reds won 8-6, which made me very happy. Everything worked out great for my first game. My team won, and my favorite player delivered the winning blow. I had always had fun watching and playing baseball but now I was hooked; baseball was now in my blood.

My love of baseball helped me continue to play through college. I always try to catch a game on television or in person when possible. To this day, it is the most exciting and at the same time relaxing activity that I can participate in. Now I will try to pass my love of the game onto my two young sons.





It's not What you Spend but What you Pull

By Stephen Duell aka Spuds1961

I'll start this off by saying I am probably one of the cheapest if not the cheapest collector out there, as most on the boards of SCF will know by my many discounted retail breaks. I make a modest salary and I will treat myself to an expensive hobby box every now and then, as long as the Mrs. Is okay with it. For my money though, I find it a lot easier to break even or come out ahead on the discounted retail front. Here is my thinking; yes I might have to deal with expired redemptions and promotions, but for the most part everything you should expect from a pack of cards is in there.

I will say you must be educated on what you're buying in the discounted blasters, as if you go in blindly you most likely will take a beating, see retail 2007 UD Future Stars, more often than not for your \$9.99: 39 commons and a high numbered insert. I have it pretty good in Mississippi as it seems there are more retail stores that sell cards here than most other states, it has to be the Walmart and Fred's capital of the world.

I remember the first time I noticed that Fred's even carried cards, I needed something for my car and walked down the toy aisle and saw the discounted blister packs and blaster boxes, didn't pull anything great that day but it allowed me a cheap break while I was bored. I am as much of a gambler as the next collector, but I figure why spend 80 to 100 dollars on a hobby box when I can get about 70 packs for 1.49 from Fred's? Yes the odds aren't as good but I believe in the theory that in quantity over quality you're bound to hit sooner or later.

Here is where I will brag a little about some of the cards pulled from my local Fred's and Walmart to let you guys know it can happen. I'll list them in order of my favorites starting with what I think is best and going downward.

1 Kevin Durant 07/08 Topps chrome white refractor RC # 49/99 from a \$1.49 pack at Fred's.

2 Clayton Kershaw 2009 UD Goudey sport royalty autograph, pulled from an \$11.98 discounted blaster at Walmart.

3 Cole Hamels GU patch # 10/25 from a \$9.99 UD series 1 blaster from target.

4 Yi Jianlian Topps Stadium Club xfractor RC auto, pulled from a \$11.98 blaster, also in that same box was a Shaquille O'Neal beam team GU card also from Walmart.

5 Howie Kendrick 2007 Topps 52 red ink auto # 03/52 from a \$9.99 blaster from target.

I have pulled enough money cards in my cheap breaks to justify my lack of love for hobby boxes, not knocking you guys who like the hobby version better, but let's just say when it comes to hobby my luck is pathetic. In closing I'm not saying retail is better than hobby, quite the contrary as who wouldn't want the guarantee of 4 hits in one box. What I am saying is if you guys see some products that you thought didn't get the love they deserved when they first came out, and now you can buy them at a fraction of the cost I say go for it. Even if you don't pull anything you still will find something that is worth the money. Hope you collectors enjoyed this read, have a great and most of all cheap collecting day!



Through the Eyes of my Twelve Year Old Self

By Jimmy Budny aka jbudny

The moment my view on card collecting changed was when I began to see it through my twelve year old eyes. I had the privilege of growing up through the 1990s, hockey cards so called “junk era”. My collecting peaked in the summer of 1996 during the insert boom and my interest in collecting died out in 2001.

I stored my best cards as a kid in top loaders with a penny sleeve in a blue Rubbermaid box. When I stopped collecting in 2001, the box was placed in my closet and remained un-touched until the start of 2010.

While I stopped collecting hockey in 2001, I slowly began getting interested in the hobby again in 2006. I had a blast collecting cards as a kid and for me it was a way of life. It pains me to admit this but I got back into the hobby for money and not for fun. I busted product with hopes of pulling top rookies and low numbered hits for a big payday on eBay.

My interest in the hobby finally changed in late 2009 after I had finished school for good and was looking to find a career. I had excelled during my time in school and I felt that life after school would come easy. I quickly realized that the transition to adulthood would not be anything but easy and that I would have to grind it out in a menial job for a while.

I needed to find a healthy escape, one that would take me to a happy place when I had the lowest of days. I don't remember exactly why or how I re-discovered my blue Rubbermaid box with my childhood treasures, all I know is that while I sorted through the box my whole perspective on the hobby changed. I thought back to the care-free, happy times of my childhood when hockey was my life and focus. A glimpse of these mass-produced pieces of cardboard brought me back to a much simpler time in life, even if it was just for a moment.

I easily picked out the gem of the box, my favorite card as a kid, my favorite card now and the best pull of my life: 1995-96 Pinnacle Mask Andy Moog. Before you start laughing at me, I'll explain why this card is worth more to me then the recent Wayne Gretzky PSA 10 that sold for nearly \$95,000.

In the summer of 1996 I was away on a camping trip with my family. I loved camping as a kid because of constantly being outdoors and I would spend hours memorizing the Beckett price guide. I always drooled over nice inserts that Beckett would pull or picture in there magazine. I loved the 1995-96 releases; especially Pinnacle but more specifically the Mask inserts.

On a rainy afternoon my family and I headed into town to stock up on food and wander around the tiny mall located next to the grocery store. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a small card show set up in the center court of the mall. I had already spent most of the money I had with me except for \$1. One seller had a massive box of loose packs for sale at a dollar each, I found one lonely pack of 1995-96

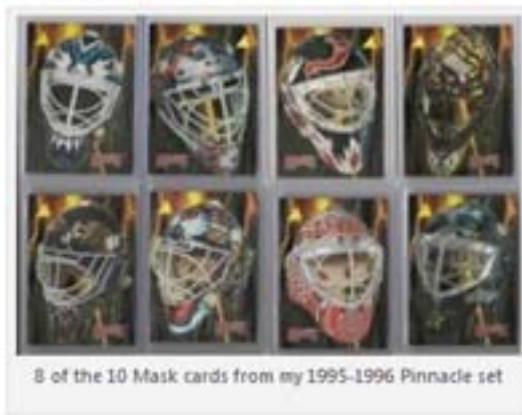


Pinnacle and bought it with my last dollar. I safely tucked the pack in my pocket so I could open it later on the card ride home.

I still remember opening the pack in the car, looking through the cards and seeing the brown reflective foil with lightning bolts of the Andy Moog mask card sticking out at me. While most people would get excited over a pull like this, I was in complete disbelief. I tucked the pack safely away while checking the contents of the pack every so often for the rest of my camping trip to make sure my eyes had not deceived me. I couldn't wait to get home to show off my pull to the neighborhood kids as they all would be envious of me for the weeks that would follow.

One of the first projects I pursued after getting back into collection 90s product was going after the complete 1995-96 Pinnacle Mask set. I found singles for roughly \$5 to \$10 each on eBay and even some in discount bins at card shows. Finally eight months later I acquired the last card, Martin Brodeur off eBay for roughly \$20. I consider the set to be in my "lifetime PC", something I will never sell or trade.

When I think about collecting, I think about memories and not dollar signs. The hobby has become a business about making money and unless you have deep pockets it's tough to collect recent product. While a \$100 a box does not seem like a lot, you need to factor in that it's addictive to open wax and one box leads to more boxes. One box leads to more boxes and your bank account soon begins to dwindle rapidly as you get hooked (I have been there before).



Since I've viewed the hobby through my twelve year old eyes, collecting has become fun again. It's a huge thrill to find rare cards that don't appear very often. Usually I've found these cards through trades on message boards, where the owners have been very generous in trading them away. I've developed the term "bringing them home" in reference to when I find a card that would hold great significance in my collection due to a childhood memory of the card. Usually the card is one that I highly sought after as a youngster but was never able to obtain as a kid. It's nice to reel these cards into my collection, where the card will be greatly appreciated and enjoyed.

As I continue to embark through a lifetime of collecting, I hope I will carry on seeing the hobby from a childlike perspective. The hobby was originally intended for children and it was meant to be fun. With every nice card I pick up from my childhood, I'm reminded of the carefree days when a few base cards or a nice pack hit would brighten the darkest of days. I encourage everyone to take the time to view the hobby through the eyes of their twelve year old selves. I ensure that you will not be disappointed and you will have more enjoyment collecting than you possibly could have imagined.