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Collector's

feature:

A word with our friends from

**Legends
DEPOT**

**& Starside
SIGNATURES**



THE
ULTIMATE

RIVALRY

SCF

RIP DAN WHELDON JUNE 22, 1978 - OCTOBER 16, 2011



Read Stephen Taylor's moving article on p.34-35...

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Times Are Changing
By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

Wow...what a month it has been! As a hockey fan, the start of the season is always exciting but as a Habs fan, this particular start of season has been soul destroying...until the Habs picked themselves up and went on to win 4 games in a row. I guess that's what sports are made up of really, highs and lows. Lose one day, win the next...Be the best player in the NHL one day, get a couple of concussions and be on the sidelines for ages (we miss you Sidney). It doesn't just apply to hockey either...one of our writers came up with an interesting piece this month on Dan Wheldon in the wake of his demise and it really made me reflect on sports...Yes, hockey and football are contact sports and they come with inherent risks but those risks are nothing compared to the risks race car drivers are taking. It does put things into perspective...after all, no matter how wind up we get about games and results, no one will die because the Habs took one too many too many men on the ice penalty or even because they lost 4 games in a row. I guess this is just my way of saying let's enjoy the sports we love and the time we spend watching/playing and remember that whatever happens, we're alive and we should cherish that. Dan Wheldon cannot do it anymore, nor can Derek Boogard, Rick Rypien or Wade Belak or the whole Lokomotiv team for that matter. It's been a tough few months in sports hasn't it?

Thankfully, the hobby is still around to cheer us up and after the start of the NHL season, the hobby hockey season is set to kick into gear this month. The hobby season is just not quite there until UD series one comes out introducing us to the fresh crop of young guns and this is set to happen any day now! Another thing which is set to happen soon is the Toronto Expo which takes place from November 11th to November 13th. If you are in town, make sure you check it out and have a thought for us poor folks who are too far away to go. And he who says Fall Expo also says Ultimate Memorabilia. ITG's flagship's release will be in its 11th incarnation this year and you can bet that it will be as good as always! Dr. Price is dedicated to putting out the best possible product out there and no one quite does memorabilia cards like him.

For my part, I am saddened to say that I will not be buying any UM this year. They say life is a cycle and I feel collecting also is one. It seems that I've reached the end of a cycle and I am therefore selling my collection, I don't know what it is but it appears that I am now more interested by actual memorabilia (signed jerseys, sticks etc...) than cardboard. Will it change again? It could happen but for now, I am spending a lot of time setting up sales on eBay so if you need some Patrick Roy cards, check out my auctions! Times are changing I guess...right, until next time, enjoy this issue and have fun collecting!

SPORTCARD & MEMORABILIA

**NOVEMBER
11, 12, 13**



An Interview with Wess Perisa of Legends Depot
By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

Regular browsers of SCF's hockey forums will have seen the words "Legends Depot," "Starside Signatures," and the name Wess Perisa quite a bit in recent months. He has helped sponsor some incredible contests for SCF's members, including the two ongoing mega-contests for the 2011-12 NHL season, The Race for the Price and The Ultimate Rivalry. He also played an instrumental role in the author's birthday party last April. He is a good friend of mine, and a good friend of SCF's. I recently had the opportunity to connect with Wess and have a great discussion about his latest ventures in the sports memorabilia industry, his recollection of the Habs/Leafs rivalry, and I get to ask a quick follow-up question about that one incredible night last spring.

To check out Legends Depot, head to <http://legendsdepot.com> and of course Starside Signatures at: <http://www.starsidesignatures.com>

RGM81: It's been a few months since our last interview (published in the March 2011 issue of Collector's Corner) - how have you been? One major new development for you since we last discussed things at length has been the inception of Legends Depot, an auction-style sports memorabilia website. What led you to create this new venture?

Wess: In a word, busy. Among many ventures, I developed Legends Depot in order to have a "home base" online. Having launched multiple brands in the sports memorabilia industry, I wanted to create a platform for all of my brands to be displayed, at the same time, creating an open platform for vendors from all sports to market their brands and products. The end result: a larger selection for collectors.



RGM81: Do you have any targets in mind for your first year with Legends Depot? Any big concrete goals that you'd like to achieve?

Wess: I do have some targets in mind for Legends Depot, one I am willing to share is my goal to utilize the reach of Legends Depot and its resources to raise \$1,000,000.00 for a variety of charities including Right to Play, Warchild, Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Toronto Sick Kids Foundation, Montreal Canadiens Childrens Foundation just to name some of the organizations we are supporting.

RGM81: There are a lot of players, teams, and items featured at Legends Depot that were not present at StarSide Signatures - how important is it to you to expand beyond primarily Montreal Canadiens-



based memorabilia and into a more general market?

Wess: Very important. Obviously I have a strong connection to Montreal due to my relationship with some of its current stars, but just as there are fans and collectors of Les Canadiens, there are also great fans in every other hockey city! It is very important to give the fans and collectors what they are looking for, and that is why Legends depot is an open marketplace, where vendors from every city, and every sport for that matter are welcome.



RGM81: That said, the Habs are still a major part of Legends Depot, and so is Carey Price. How did it come about that he would be doing the pink mask and pads, and that they would be auctioned off on your website to support the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation?

Wess: The Habs will always be a focal point in the hockey legends listings on Legends Depot, as their spot in hockey history simply commands it. As for Carey Price, he is truly in a class all of his own. Where did the Pink mask and equipment idea come from? Carey Price. When he suggested he wanted to auction the items off to raise some money, I immediately offered my support and the support of Legends Depot. It's a great cause, and fantastic initiative that has received a great deal of attention which Carey is hoping will help raise a substantial amount of money for CBCF.

To see the auction listing for the Carey Price Breast Cancer Awareness Mask, visit this link: <http://www.auction.legendsdepot.com/CAREY-PRICE-GAME-USED-MONTREAL-CANADIENS->

[MASK - ALL - PROCEEDS - TO - THE - CANADIAN - BREAST - CANCER -](http://www.auction.legendsdepot.com/CAREY-PRICE-GAME-USED-MONTREAL-CANADIENS-)



FOUNDATION,name,102776,auction_id,auction_details

RGM81: David Arrigo has done some fantastic work with this creation. Of the handful of Price's masks he's designed to date, which one would be your favourite and why?

Wess: I can honestly say that I don't have a favourite...yet.

RGM81: He put up a tweet late on Monday, November 1st that he's putting the finishing touches on a new Remembrance Day mask for Carey. What's going to happen with that one?

Wess: Legends Depot of course!

RGM81: I remember there being some discussion about this concept back in April...

Wess: Your memory serves you well, but the theme has changed completely.

RGM81: This is definitely going to be a must-see unveiling. As always, can't wait to see it! As a fan, I love having the chance to interact with the players, especially at an in-person autograph signing. How approachable are the guys you work with when it comes to setting up an event?

Wess: The guys I work with are great, or I just wouldn't work with them. For the most part, I find hockey players truly appreciate their "jobs", and their fans. On the rare occasion a player is "disinterested" or "cold" towards the fans during one of my events or signings, I simply will not invite the player back again. The players I work with on a regular basis always leave the fans with a smile on their face, and that's what it's all about.



RGM81: Are there any that come to you pro-actively and say, "Hey I'd like to raise some money for a cause, what can we do?" Or is it more you pitching the idea to them?

Wess: Well, to be honest, it's usually me coming up with the ideas, but let's be fair about this. Today's hockey play-



ers have very full schedules with games, travel, training, media, etc. Not to mention an actual personal life for the brief moments away from the rinks during the season, so it's not surprising to me that I don't have players coming to me and saying "Hey, I have some free time, let's raise some money". Then again, there is always the exception (see Carey Price).

RGM81: So once you have the event lined up, what is the typical (if there is such a thing) day like when it comes to the signing session? How long is the actual process of making that 2-3 hour session happen? Feel free to use examples, such as the signing held with Patrick Roy this past June.

Wess: No such thing as a typical signing, as so many variables determine the course of the signing. The Patrick Roy signing you refer to was a private signing, which means it's basically just Patrick, his assistant, a friend of mine and myself, and in about an hour and a half or so we can sign 1000+ items. Now on the flip side, if it were a public signing, getting through 1000+ items in that format would take 3 hours easy.

RGM81: Do you have any signing events scheduled for this season? How can people find out more information about upcoming signings and events?

Wess: I have a whole bunch of signings all throughout the season. Fans can find out more at www.legendsdepot.com under the signings link.



RGM81: Switching gears a bit, at SCF we're thrilled to be doing another mega-contest with you. There's a lot of people engaged in it so far and I've received a lot of great feedback from our members that are so excited about the possibility of seeing a Habs-Leafs game. I've had a couple of people ask me which players will be available for the meet-and-greet portion of the Contest's grand prize - any hints as to who they may get to meet?

Wess: Hmhmhmhm.....I'm pretty sure you can guess ONE of the players who will be there. ;)

RGM81: Have you seen the ultimate hockey rivalry in person for yourself? Any memories of the two teams' legendary clashes from your youth to share?



Wess: I've seen a few Habs vs Leafs games over the years. I guess my favorite memory would have to be watching the Leafs vs Habs in the 80's with my grandma. Of course back then I was a LEAFS fan (shhhh), and my grandma would cheer for the Habs just because, and I quote, "They always pass the puck so nicely."

RGM81: They do have a certain art to it, and I would say that it's for the best that you've switched sides to the good guys! Do you think that the Habs-Leafs rivalry will pick up in the near future? It's been a few tough years for Toronto, while the Habs have been embroiled in some harsh battles with Boston. What will it take to get Toronto vs. Montreal back to the forefront, in your opinion?

Wess: I think it already has picked up...all it took was the Leafs finally winning, and taking the first 2 games against the Habs this season had Montreal fans up in arms. Of course with the recent battles with Boston still fresh on fans' memories, I think Boston will remain the most hated team in Montreal for quite some time.

RGM81: Here's a more personal and fun one before we wrap it up - the last time we talked for the magazine we had this little exchange:

**Richard: One last question, what's the best thing about being in the sports memorabilia business?*

**Wess: Every once and a while I get to make the dreams of others become reality. That really is "PRICE-LESS"*

This would have been about six weeks or so before my 30th birthday. Were the plans for that rather spectacular event already well underway



at that point? Was there a bit of a *nudge nudge wink wink* subtle hint in there?



Wess: I don't think I was that subtle...was I? :)

RGM81: The joys of being somewhat oblivious and underestimating just how awesome the people around me really can be! LOL Thank you again for your time with us, Wess, and for being such a great friend of SCF's – we really appreciate getting to work with some of the best people in the business!

A huge thanks to Wess for taking the time to speak with us for the magazine. Please be sure to check out his websites as well as the contests he has helped to sponsor at SCF!





November 2011

Here are this month's releases. At the time of going to press, all dates were accurate but as you very well know, products are often pushed back shortly before release.

Hockey	Football
ITG Ultimate Memorabilia 11 th Edition 11/10/11	2011 Panini Certified 11/09/11
2011/12 Panini Certified Hockey 11/16/11	2011 Panini Gold Standard 11/23/11
2011/2012 Panini Pinnacle 11/23/11	2011 Panini Gridiron Gear 11/30/11
2011/12 Score 11/09/11	2011 Topps Triple Threads 11/30/11
2011/12 Upper Deck Series 1 11/08/11	2011 Upper Deck SP Authentic 11/22/11
	2011 Upper Deck University of Texas 11/08/11
Basketball	Baseball
NO RELEASE	2011 Bowman's Draft Picks and Prospects 11/23/11
	2011 Topps Tier one 11/09/11
Racing	
2012 Press Pass 11/18/11	
2011 Press Pass Legends 11/03/11	





2011 Topps Chrome Football Product Review
By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Box details

24 packs per box
 4 cards per pack
 Current Retail Price (online): \$77.99 - \$89.99

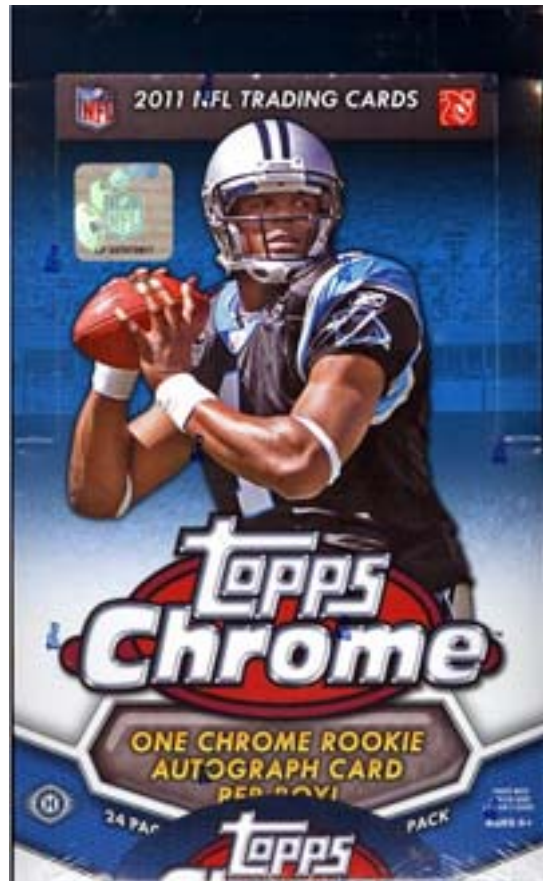
Product description

AUTOGRAPHED ROOKIE CARDS - 1 PER HOBBY BOX!

Rookie Autographs - Forty gifted NFL Rookies from the base set with their signatures on a variation card.

Available in the following numbered* Refractor Parallel versions:

- Superfractor - ONE OF ONE! HOBBY EXCLUSIVE!
- NEW! RED - numbered to 5. HOBBY EXCLUSIVE!
- Gold - Numbered* to 10
- Black - Numbered* to 25
- NEW! CRYSTAL ATOMIC - numbered to 50. HOBBY EXCLUSIVE!
- Refractor - Numbered* to 99



And more!

What we pulled

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W21o_elFuWg

Base: 75/220 (34.1%)
 Refractors (8)
 Atomic Prism Refractors (1) /139 - Jimmy Graham
 Black Refractors (1) /299 - Roddy White





- Bowman Chrome Rookies (2)
- Finest Freshman (4)
- Finest Freshman Gold /75 (1): Mikel Leshoure (75/75)
- Rookie Recognition (2)
- Superlative Rookies Die-Cut (1)



Leonard Hankerson Rookie Autograph



Final ratings

- Base - 4/5
- Design - 4.5/5
- Fun - 3.5/5
- Value - 4.25/5
- Rebuy - 4.5/5

Total - 20.75/25 (83%)



Pros:

On-card rookie autographs
Refreshing designs (mainly the inserts)
Highly collectible set

Cons:

Low yield of numbered cards
Expect only 1/3 of the base set in each box
Only one autograph while baseball's version has two

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.





ITG Canada vs The World Hockey Product Review

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

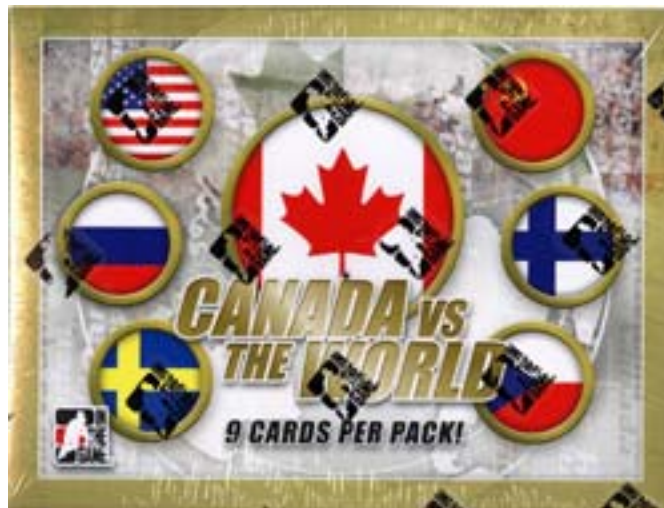
First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at In The Game for providing us with this box.

Box details

- 1 pack per box
- 9 cards per pack
- Current Retail Price (online): \$89.99 - \$104.99

Product description

- 4 Authentic Game-Used Memorabilia Cards
- 2 Authentic Autograph Cards
- 1 100 Years of Hockey Card Collecting Card
- 2 Non-Memorabilia Cards



Content highlight

Authentic Game-Used Memorabilia Cards

- There are 4 in every box! A huge selection of Game-Used Memorabilia Cards with a fantastic International flair!

Authentic Autograph Cards

- Each box of Canada VS The World will contain 2 Autograph Cards from some of the biggest names in international Hockey.

100 Years of Collecting

- Limited to only 1 per box the year-long celebration comes to its nostalgic conclusion with the final 25 cards!

Non-Memorabilia Insert Cards

- There are four different Non Memorabilia Inserts to collect: Protecting Canada's Crease, Great Moment, Summit Series and Roots of International Hockey. You will find 2 in every box!

What we pulled

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kY1WpZCxURg&feature=player_embedded



Base - N/A
 100 Years Of Collecting (1)
 Great Moments (1)
 Summit Series (1)



Patrick Marleau Autograph



Bill Ranford Autograph



Canadian Cloth Black Version
 Dino Ciccarelli Jersey /120



International Material Black Version
 Adam Larsson Jersey /120





International Material Black Version
Jaromir Jagr Jersey /120



World Junior Grads Silver Version
Alexander Ovechkin Jersey /90



Final ratings

Base - N/A
Design - 3.5/5
Fun - 5/5
Value - 4.5/5
Rebuy - 3.5/5

Total - 16.5/20 (82.5%)

Pros:

No base set (straight to the point)
Autograph stickers barely noticeable
Six hits per box
Good mix of past, present and future

Cons:

Too Canada centric (obvious from the product name)
Sticker Autographs
Commonplace Design (seen similar designs in other ITG products)



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



Topps 2011 Finest Baseball Product Review
By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product details

2 miniboxes per master box
 6 packs per minibox
 5 cards per pack
 Current Retail Price (online): \$74.99 - \$89.99

Product highlights

NEW! AUTOGRAPHED ON-CARD ROOKIE CARDS - ONE PER MASTER BOX! 1:2 MINI BOXES

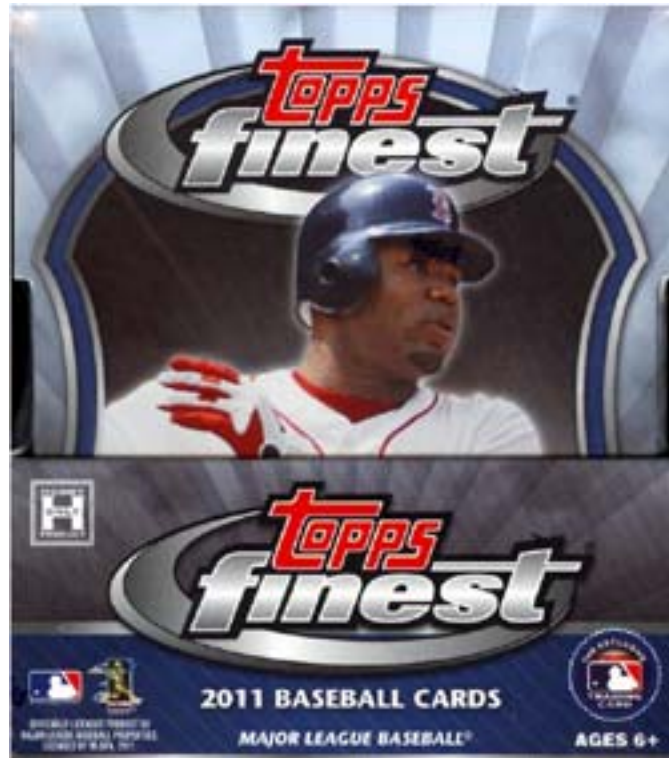
19 Rookies personally sign each of these numbered* Refractor cards.

- Super-Fractor - 1/1!
- Printing Plate - 1/1!
- Purple - Numbered* to 5
- Die-Cut Mosaic - Numbered* to 10
- Red - Numbered* to 25
- Gold - Numbered* to 59
- Orange - Numbered* to 99
- Green - Numbered* to 199
- X-Fractor - Numbered* to 299
- Refractor - Numbered*

And more...

What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vknD7EoPPw>





Base: 30/60 (50%)
 Rookies: 20/40 (50%)
 Refractors /549 (2): Roy Oswalt, Jered Weaver
 X-fractors /299 (1): Justin Verlander
 Green Rookie Refractors /199 (2): Domonic Brown, Zach Britton
 Orange Rookie Refractors /99 (1): Kyle Drabek

Finest Foundation (1)
 Finest Moments (1)



Dillon Gee Rookie Autograph /499





Alexi Ogando Orange Refractor Dual Jersey/Autograph /99

Final ratings

Base - 4.5/5

Design - 4.5/5

Fun - 4/5

Value - 3.5/5

Rebuy - 3.5/5

Total - 20/25 (80%)

Pros:

On-card rookie autograph

All Refractors are numbered

Sleek design

Cons:

Sticker Autographs for veterans

Each minibox seeded the same per pack



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.





2011 Press Pass Legends Racing Product Review

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

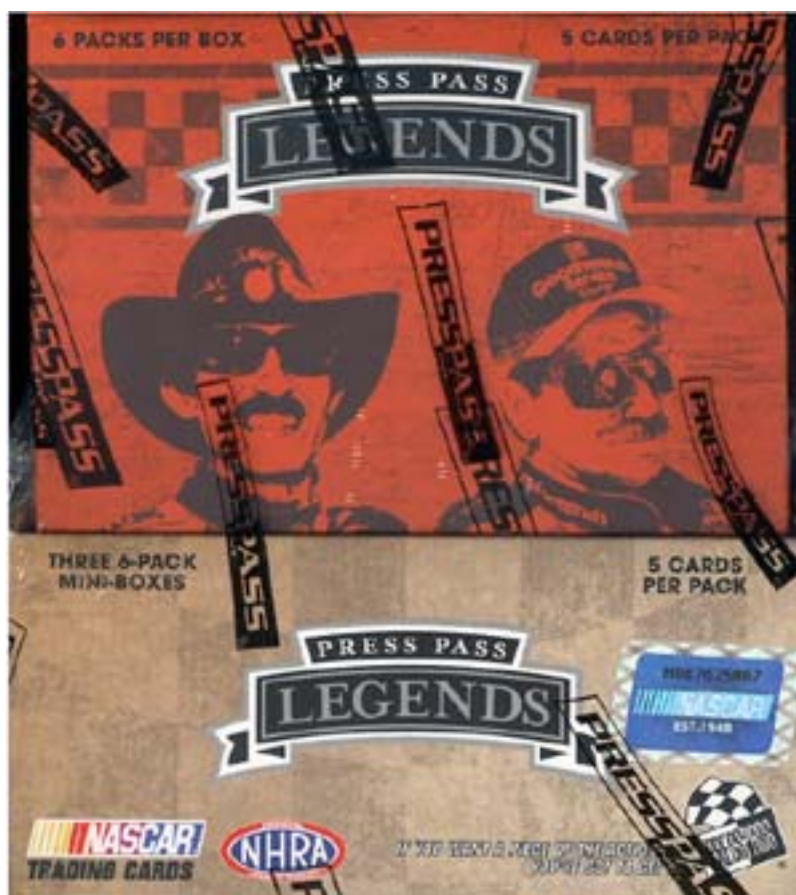
First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at Press Pass for providing us with this box.

Box details

3 miniboxes per master box
 6 packs per minibox
 5 cards per pack
 Current Retail Price (online): \$119.99
 - \$134.99

Product highlights

- Three autographs and three memorabilia cards in every 18-pack box!
- Each 6-pack mini box includes one autograph and one race-used memorabilia card
- Vintage race-used memorabilia!
- Legends Autographs with expanded roster including Richard Childress, Dale Inman, Danny "Chocolate" Myers and Dick Breggren!
- Autograph cards including Legends Autographs, Motorsports Masters Autographs, Lasting Legacies Signature Edition, Pacing the Field Autographs and Racing Cuts.
- Race-used memorabilia cards including Lasting Legacies, Famed Fabrics, Prominent Pieces (multi-swatch cards) and Trophy Room memorabilia cards.
- Four Wide Signature Series cards
- 80-Card base set



Joining the autograph roster of drivers in 2011 are:

- Former driver and current team owner - RICHARD CHILDRESS
- 2011 NASCAR HOF inductee - DALE INMAN
- Legendary crew member for Dale Earnhardt Sr - DANNY "CHOCOLATE" MYERS
- Renowned NASCAR commentator - DICK BERGGREN
- And More!

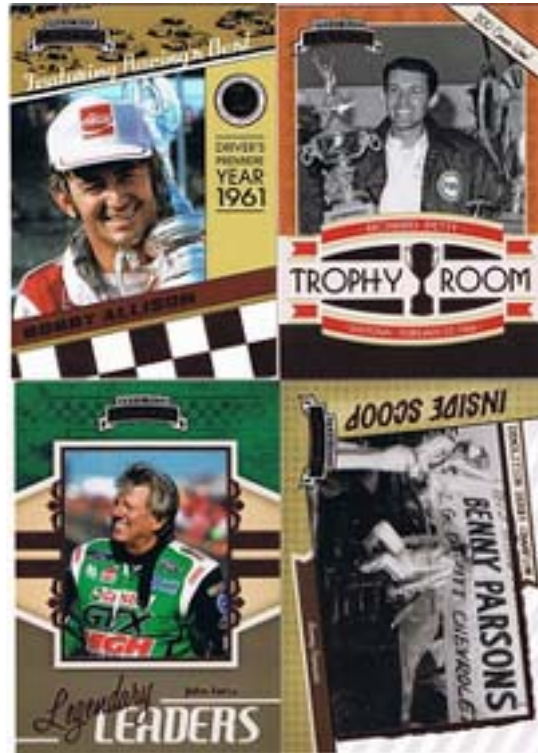


What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c-Hs1PDUss>

Base: 67/80 (83.8%)

Gold Parallel /250 (6) - Benny Parsons, David Pearson, Richard Petty, Kyle Busch, Michael Waltrip, Captive Audience - 1963 World Series
 Red Parallel /99 (3) - Rick Berggren, Terry Labonte, Jimmie Johnson
 Platinum Parallel /25 (1) - Dale Earnhardt

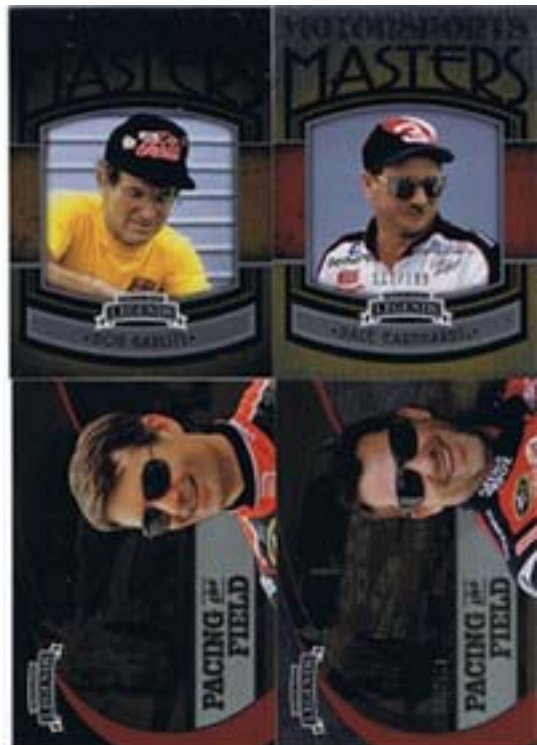


Motorsports Masters (5)

Motorsports Masters Silver /199 (1) - Dale Earnhardt

Pacing The Field (2)

Pacing The Field Silver /199 (1) - Tony Stewart





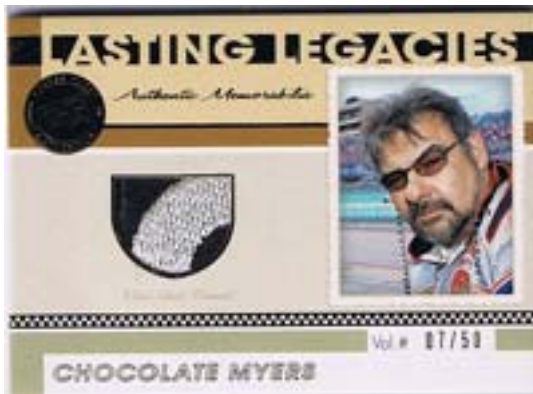
Cale Yarborough Cyan Back
Side Press Plate 1/1



Chocolate Myers 2-color Firesuit/Dale Earnhardt
1-color Firesuit w/ Loose Thread Dual Relic /99



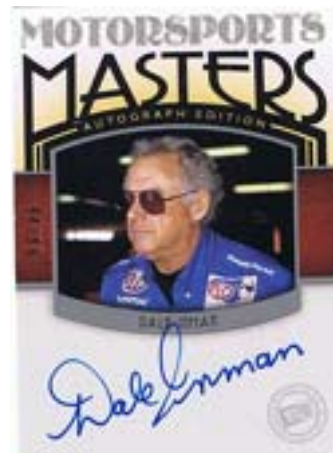
Lasting Legacies Gold Chocolate
Myers 2-color Firesuit /50



Lasting Legacies Gold Dave Marcis Firesuit /50

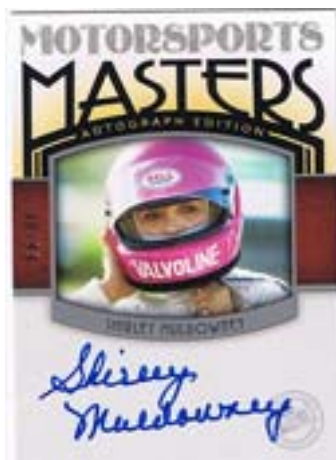


Motorsports Masters Dale Inman Autograph /99





Motorsports Masters Shirley
Muldowney Autograph /99



Pacing The Field Bill Elliott Autograph /40



Final ratings

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

Total - 22.5/25 (90%)

Pros:

- On-card autographs
- Fantastic design (especially the use of the checkered flag design)
- Base and inserts are easily collectible
- Six "hits" overall on average
- Each pack yields a "hit" or numbered card

Cons:

- Placement of "hits" the same in every minibox
- Solid value, but steep price for many collectors

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 more information on all their products, visit them today at www.presspassinc.com.



2010/2011 Panini Elite Black Box Basketball Product Review
By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Box details

1 pack per box
 8 cards per pack
 Current Retail Price (online): \$249.99 - \$279.99

Product details

Box break
 - 3 Autographs per box!
 - 3 Memorabilia cards per box!
 - 2 Inserts per box!



Product highlights

- All Autographs & memorabilia cards #'d to 149 or less!
 - ALL Inserts to 99 or less!

What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgzv7mSaazg>

Base /99 (2): Kevin Durant, Dennis Rodman



Kevin Love Jersey /99





Antawn Jamison Autograph /49



Mark Aguirre Autograph /149



Monta Ellis Crusade Dual Jersey /99



The Rookies DeMarcus Cousins 3-color Patch / 99



Passing The Torch Darrell Griffith/Devin Harris Dual Logoman/Dual Autographs /99





Final thoughts

Base - 5/5

Design - 4/5

Fun - 4.5/5

Value - 2.5/5

Rebuy - 2.5/5

Total - 18.5/25 (74%)

In continuing the trend of bringing high-end products to basketball, Panini unveils Elite Black Box. Each box contains one pack with eight cards, six of which are "hits". The base set contains 200 cards, 100 veterans and 100 retired legends. These cards are numbered to 99 and you will find either 1 or 2 per box.

The six "hits" will break down to 3 autographs and 3 relics per box. There are a multitude of sets to chase and a broad mix of possibilities. Plenty will be individual players with a relic swatch or autograph, but others will feature dual players including booklet versions. Look for a lot of the signatures to be of the on-card variety.

There are some exciting aspects, such as the limited number of base cards as well as the design of the cards. In addition, there's always an air of jubilant anticipation when opening something with one pack. But those qualities are overshadowed by the downfall of this product. Panini Elite Black Box exemplifies what is wrong with high-end products.

High-end products should simply be about the rookies and the cream of the crop in their sport. There seems to be a lot of fluff and fodder on the checklist. Two hundred base subjects is way too many for a set like this. It should have been streamlined to half, 50 veterans and 50 legends, along with the rookies being the extension of the set. Then you have the promotion of on-card autographs, yet all I see are stickers. Finally, does anyone remember when getting a Logoman card was rare and something to behold? Now we have gone to manufactured versions numbered to as high as 149! Seriously!

I've said it before many times. I know you are not going to get a killer box every time, but the companies can fix the subject matter inserted into the boxes. Make the product relevant by what's inside, not by all the different types of cards you can get. You want consumers to shell out this kind of money? Then, give them a reason to do it. Multiple hits and low numbered cards are not the reason if they are questioning why certain subjects are in it in the first place.

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.



And That's Why They Play 9!

By Stephen Duell aka Spuds1961

September 28th was a monumental night for professional baseball. Never in the history of MLB were 2 wildcard slots decided in extra innings on the last day of the season. With the Yankees already slotted as the top seed in the American League they really didn't need to do anything but show up, but a 7-0 lead over Tampa Bay after 7 innings had to have Red Sox nation feeling giddy. I already conceded this game to the Bronx Bombers as I went to walk my dogs at the start of the bottom of the 8th. I came back to see the 7-0 lead had been all but erased, now it was 7-6 after 8 innings, still ahead and with Mo available still thought they would win. I wasn't all that surprised to see Cory Wade out there to pitch the 9th but I still think it wasn't the Yankees' best option.

Okay 2 quick outs later I still think this one's gonna go in the win column, especially with a guy batting .108 on the season coming up in Dan Johnson, well here's where things get weird on a 2-2 pitch Cory Wade actually gave Johnson a pitch he could handle, something Mo never would've done. A sharp line drive down the right field line turned into the game tying home run, sorry Red Sox nation, but there's still extra innings and you guys are beating Baltimore 3-2 in the 9th so at least you'll win and get to play 1 more game at the very least.

Let's head out to Baltimore for the 9th and watch Papelbon close it out, he proceeded to strike out the first 2 batters so things were looking good for Sox fans, but Chris Davis kept Baltimore's hopes alive with a double, still not the worst scenario as Papelbon will get the last out. What happened next is why even though they have won titles in 2004 and 2007 I still believe that the Red Sox are a cursed franchise. Nolan Reimold, he of the .244 batting average hits a ground rule double to tie it at 3, well surely Papelbon will get Robert Andino out to send it into extras, not so fast a line drive to left wound up just out of reach of the Red Sox top off season acquisition, who really did nothing to help this team; Carl Crawford. The O's just completed a 2 out comeback against the best closer this side of Mariano Rivera, 4-3 final, but the Yankees game is still in extras, let me flip back to that one.

In the top of the 12th the Yankees proceeded to have 1st and 3rd with no outs, surely they will score at least one run, nope Greg Golson needs to go back to spring training to learn you don't stray off of 3rd that far when a ground ball is hit that way. Evan Longoria fields the ball and tags him out, still 1st and 2nd with 1 out isn't that bad, well no runs scored as the last 2 outs of the 12th were pretty easy a pop out and Gardner's ground out to end the inning. Up come the Rays, Proctor gets the 1st out but up comes the face of Tampa Bays franchise Evan Longoria. Longoria ends it on a line drive homer over the left field wall 8-7 Rays, wildcard series here they come, sorry Red Sox nation.

Let's go to the National league shall we, the Cardinals put up a 5 spot in the first against the Astros, so this one wasn't gonna be a contest. The Phillies are playing the Braves and they really don't need this game, but somehow they manage to stay close going into the 9th, down 3-2 looks like the Braves will at least get to a 1 game playoff against the Cardinals. Guess what? the Phillies actually tie it in their at bat in the 9th, extras are needed again to decide the final wildcard slot. Both teams had slim chances, but the Phillies pushed one across in the top of the 13th on a broken bat infield single by Hunter Pence. This was one epic night of baseball that I can say I was happy to witness, and remember fans 27 outs means 27 outs, enjoy the playoffs and World Series as I feel this is just the start of more memorable moments!



Panini Really Captured the Spirit of the Thing **By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan**

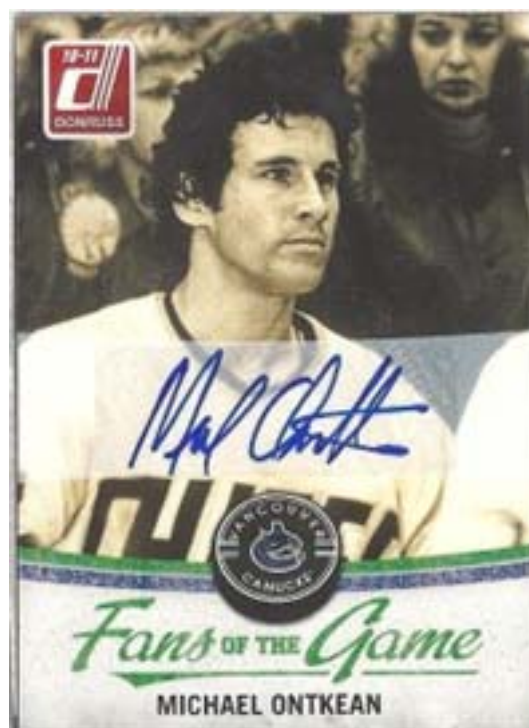
If the play on Dickie Dunn's immortal words in the title was lost on you, you probably won't get. If you've never described a penalty as "two minutes, by yourself, you feel shame, and then you get free" you might roll your eyes as you read on. If the words "criminal element" don't immediately make you think of Ogie Ogilthorpe, some of Panini's best ideas this year were probably an afterthought for you.

If you've ever shouted at a friend, while he's grabbing you a drink "none of that stinkin' root beer!" I suspect you'll shortly be nodding in agreement. If you've ever encouraged your rec-hockey team to play "Old Time Hockey" like Eddie Shore, you'll understand where this article is coming from. If you've ever had a bus-ride with your minor hockey team, when Slap Shot was played on the little TV screens, you might even wonder why it took this long for someone to make these cards.

When Panini began to announce their line up of releases for the 2010-11 season, it showed that Donruss was one of the early season releases. That it would contain live rookie cards of some of the new season's top rookies (Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle, Tyler Seguin, amongst others) caught many people's attention right away. With 6 Rated Rookies per box, this was the set that was supposed to be rivalling Upper Deck's Series 1. Browsing through the checklist, my eyes lit up when I saw a name that was a little more obscure: Michael Ontkean.

Ontkean was part of the Fans of the Game insert set. The fact that he was included with other celebrities like Pamela Anderson, Justin Beiber, and Willa Ford, probably made him the most unknown of the small group. Who is he? He's an actor. He's had two fairly well known roles: Sheriff Harry S. Truman in the TV Series Twin Peaks, and Ned Braden in Slap Shot.

Both the insert card, and the autographed parallel version shown Ontkean from a still shot of his famed movie roll. Pictured in his Charlestown Chiefs Jersey, these were cards I knew I must have. I purchased a couple of copies of the redemption card, each good for one of the autographed version, and other ten copies of the basic insert. Finally! One of the main characters in a movie that was released in 1977, this is the first time (that I know of) that any of the cast members had been added to a hockey card set.





overdue rookie cards of Dave Hanson ('Jack Hanson' in the movie), and Steve Carlson ('Steve Hanson' in the movie) were finally made, more than 30 years after their NHL debuts.

In today's hobby, most players that lace up their skates for an NHL game will end up with a Rookie card. Both of today's licensed manufacturers (Panini, Upper Deck) create large subsets of first year players, much to the delight of team collectors, and sometimes to the chagrin of box and case breakers. Back in the late 1970s, or early 1980s? Not very often.

Hanson played 11 games for the Detroit Red Wings back in 1978, and another 22 with the Minnesota North Stars in 1979-80. He also played parts of three seasons in the WHA, totalling only 136 games combined in either of two major professional leagues.

Carlson's cup of coffee was a little bit bigger. He played 52 games with the Los Angeles Kings in 1979-80, and laced them up for another 173 in the WHA. Interesting fact: his time with the New England Whalers in the WHA, as well as the Edmonton Oilers, allows him to lay claim to being the only player in hockey history to be a teammate of both Gordie Howe and Wayne Gretzky.

After the Limited release, I was eagerly anticipating the next run of Slap Shot themed cards from Panini. It took until their final release of the season before we saw anymore.



With the first instalment of Panini's premium release, Dominion, their creative team came up with a few real doozies.

Carlson and Hanson were once again included in the rookie subset, and once again they were autographed. Beautiful looking cards, I much prefer these to the Limited ones. They didn't stop there.

In the 'Pen Pals' autographed subset, Panini included two more cards.

Dave Hanson was included in the duals portion of the set, with the second player signing it being his son, Christian Hanson. The younger Hanson is a member of the Toronto Maple Leafs organization, having spent time with both the big club, and their AHL affiliate Marlies, over the last few seasons.



Then there was the triple that I've been waiting for, for a very long time. Dave and Steve were back on another card, but this time Steve's brother Jeff was also included. Autographs of all three Hanson Brothers, one card. Love it. Limited to 25 copies. Absolutely love it! The price may not be too high – but since adding this triple autograph to my collection, it's easily one of my favourite 10 cards (outside my Ranford collection).

Finally, the guys at Panini came up with what is (IMO) one of the crown jewels of their releases this year: A Paul Newman cut signature. Newman, of course, played the legendary role of player / coach Reggie Dunlop. He died back in 2008, so it was nice to see someone finally make a hockey card of this guy, even if it was a 1/1 that was way out of my price range.

Some of my absolute favourite cards from the 2010-11 season, I really hope Panini can follow these up with some more this year. I realize that any new Slap Shot cards will likely mean more Hansons, but I can't believe I'm the only collectors who would love to add autographs of Dave 'Killer' Carlson, Denis Lemieux, or even Tim 'Dr Hook' McCracken to their collections. Autographs aside, a 30 (or so) card insert set featuring the more notable faces from the movie (I think) would be a hit!





Rookies Galore and New Season's excitement!

By Richard McAdam aka RGM81



Doesn't it feel great to have hockey back in full swing? The NHL regular season has wrapped up its first month and it has provided some tremendous action and excitement. Jonathan Quick has been a true masked marvel for the Los Angeles Kings, posting three consecutive shutouts en route to his 100th career NHL victory. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins has been a dynamic force to the Edmonton Oilers, combining with other young superstars Taylor Hall and Jordan Eberle to bring Oilers fans out of their seats every night. The Winnipeg Jets caught a great glimpse at their future superstar Mark Schiefele for a couple weeks before he was returned to his junior team. The Toronto Maple Leafs are, as of this writing, leading the Northeast Division while the Boston Bruins and Montreal Canadiens are on the outside looking in if the playoffs started tomorrow. Truly, the 2011-12 campaign promises to be full of energy that delivers a lot of great memories for hockey fans.

With the NHL season under way, there have been a large number of rookie debuts of note, and this bodes well for hockey collectors. The new products being announced include some great young names that will keep hobbyists busting wax throughout the season, as they see to chase down the first cards of Nugent-Hopkins, Schiefele, Sean Couturier, Adam Larsson, Gabriel Landeskog, Cody Hodgson, and many others. Upper Deck Series 1 will be hitting store shelves in a matter of days, and the Young Guns checklist is as strong as any we have seen in recent years. The full list can be seen here: <http://upperdeckblog.com/2011/10/the-upper-deck-nhl-young-guns-are-coming-led-by-ryan-nugent-hopkins/> It is a deep class, and in addition to UD1, we can also expect to see those names soon in Score, Certified, and more!

The Toronto Fall Expo is only days away! The biggest and best sports card and memorabilia show in Canada runs from November 11-13. Dealers from across North America will be in attendance with all the latest singles and wax boxes, and the card companies will also be there in full swing. You can catch a glimpse of what to expect from each of the three companies by clicking these links:

In The Gameland returns! <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1500352>

Panini <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1510039>

Upper Deck will have more information, including their Priority Signings program, in the coming days. Keep your eyes on the Hockey Card Talk Forum!

If you will be attending the Expo, please be sure to share your story with SCF members! The hottest new products at the Expo are always UD1 and ITG Ultimate Memorabilia and we want to see those amazing breaks!



November features to be a very big month for the hobby. Each of the card companies will be releasing a number of products, so the competition for hobby dollars will be fierce. Panini kicks off its second year in the hockey business with Score, once again bringing you the hottest rookies, hard-to-find parallels, and of course the highly-coveted ReCollection Collection hard-signed autographs, all for a dollar a pack! They will follow up that release with Certified, one of the hottest products from last year. Upper Deck has its staple Series 1 (this may have come up once or twice already) bringing you the hottest Young Guns and more! ITG will have the 11th edition of its high-end Ultimate Memorabilia (now featuring Hot Packs!) out in time for the Expo as well. It will be a hot month – to keep yourself up-to-date on all the latest releases keep your eyes on this thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1394628>

Contests! SCF is always happy to bring its hockey collectors some of the best contests around. This year we have a number of major events ongoing that will take the full season to determine the winner: The Race For The Price – with a grand prize of a limited edition autographed Carey Price jersey, and several secondary prizes include a sealed box of Zenith from our pals at Panini!

The Ultimate Rivalry – whether you're a Habs or a Leafs fan, you can appreciate the value of scoring two tickets to the April 7th game in Montreal! The November leg of the contest is sponsored by our friends at Upper Deck!

There will be several other contests throughout the season, so make sure to keep checking the Hockey Contests Forum!



That's all for this month! Until next time, keep your elbows down and your sticks on the ice!



Racing's Known Danger By Stephen Taylor aka race_crazy



A famous poet and writer once said that there were indeed only three real sports on this earth: mountain climbing, bull fighting, and auto racing, and that the rest were merely games due to the fact that in these sports lives are indeed put on the line everyday for the thrill of adrenaline and victory. In recent years we have perhaps lost this idea that racing is dangerous. Within the Nascar world there has not been a fatality since the 2001 death of Dale Earnhardt and not as much as a serious injury since Jerry Nadeau at Richmond in the early 2000s. This

false sense of security of the racing community in general has grown over the last 10 years despite being tested by the NHRA deaths of Scott Kalitta and Mark Niver. (The NHRA changed its rules and shortened its Drag strip length to 1000 feet for Nitro cars and has not had a driver fatality since).

Entering into October 16th, 2011 as an avid racing fan I woke up excited like any other day to see my heroes push the limits, in this case the drivers of the Izod Indycar Series. After just watching the Nascar race the previous night in which 5-time champion Jimmie Johnson survived a head-on collision into the wall as well as Chase Miller in qualifying for the Nationwide Series event this same weekend my sense of security and safety was again proven right as both guys got out just fine like I expected them to. I was looking forward to this race in Las Vegas for the Indycars as well-with a championship on the line and the cars running in a pack at breakneck speeds it was apparent from the drop of the green that this would be an exciting watch. The element that danger and disaster is always so close is part of why I, as well as countless others, love auto racing, and in fact many of us do enjoy when our heroes test the limits of what is survivable by escaping from accidents. So on lap 13 of the event, when all hell broke loose in turn 1 and cars erupted into flames and flew through the air I once again thought: "That is crazy! I hope everyone is okay" like I had countless other times after big wrecks. Just like normal I fully expected everyone to climb out. Indeed everyone did. Except one.

Two-time Indy 500 champion and Indycar champion Dan Wheldon, one of the most successful drivers in Indycar history, did not. As the workers extracted him from his car, the helicopter took off, the drivers started crying, and the announcers started becoming emotional, those awful pit of my stomach feelings came rushing back to me. The ones I expected never to have felt again after Dale Earnhardt.



Since then, I had only had this feeling 3 times (Carl Edwards at Talladega, Michael McDowell at Texas, and Kenny Brack in a horrific Indycar wreck also at Texas) and every time the driver did indeed survive. But in this instance, as the news became clearer the somber reality check that racing is indeed and always will be dangerous hit hard. Dan Wheldon, one of the stars of the sport, was gone in an instant at 33, leaving behind a wife and two young children.

These are the days you dread in the sport and if you have been around longer than today's audience you are more familiar with the countless names that have been taken from us far too soon. Racecar drivers are normal people who have the talent and who are willing to do uncommon things for the thrill and adrenaline of speed and victory. Ask anyone with a competitive spirit who drives a racecar for a living and they will all tell you the same thing: If I could choose any way to die I would want it to be doing what I love-driving a racecar. Does that make days like October 16th, 2011 any easier? Of course not. The racing community lost one of the best drivers and humans in the sport. The fans lost a standout personality and representative. And most importantly a young family lost a husband and father. It is the dark side of racing-one that thankfully does not rear its head as often as it could. Dan is now racing with the greats in a better place now-up there holding off Earnhardt, Allison, Kulwicki, Dana, Clark, Brayton, Roberts, Brock, McCray, Lund, Senna, Ratzemberger, Petty, Irwin, Roper, Moore, Krosnoff, Renna, Weatherly, Smiley and countless others. The racing gods needed a hero and took one from us. Racing fan or not-please remember to enjoy life and love your family. RIP and Godspeed Dan Wheldon.





Football Happenings

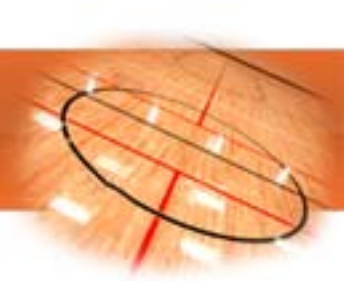
By Matthew Lambe aka bradyfanatic12

With the season in full swing now, teams and players are falling into places. Surprise teams like the Bengals, Bills, 49ers and Lions are looking like true contenders. While teams with high hopes before the season like the Cardinals, Jets, Vikings and Falcons are stumbling out of the gates. The season has had plenty of intriguing storylines. Carson Palmer being shipped to Oakland; Christian Ponder, Blaine Gabbert, and Tim Tebow taking control of their team and legendary owner Al Davis. The constant changing during the NFL season creates constant movement on the trading boards.

With every game and transaction scrolling across the television screen, the trading boards increase with activity. Player performance has caused increasing requests on the buying front as well as the selling front. A.J. Green, Andy Dalton, Cam Newton and Julio Jones so far have lived up to expectations with quality performances. The Bills, 49ers and Lions players have also been in high demand with their hot starts to the season. The Packers seem to have no Super Bowl hangover as they're still playing at an extremely high level. The underachieving teams have been quiet on the sales front and also with trade requests. Even with players like Matt Ryan, Kevin Kolb, Donovan McNabb, Mark Sanchez and Roddy White, these teams are struggling to get off the ground early in the season.

With about two thirds of the season left, the struggling teams still have a fighting chance to turn things around. The teams that have had strong starts still have a lot prove. Be on the lookout for some great new products coming out soon including Topps Chrome and Panini Certified. If you haven't already, come check out the Football Forum and join the festivities of trading, buying, selling and talking. There's always something going on and people around.





On (Off) the Court By Jay Weger aka Jay520

Contests & Winners

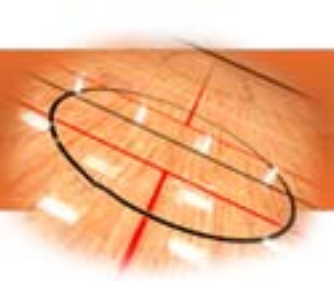
In October, the 2011 NBA Lockout Guess the Serial # contests started off slow but got going eventually. The first person to correctly guess the first contest right was lastlastlast. The standings through the end of October are: fitchjr1 with 3 wins (#3,4,6), gwo311 with 2 wins (#2,5) and lastlastlast with 1 win (#1).

In Theme Weeks, there were some great cards entered. Theme Week #28 was best Retired or HOF auto in which realreodeal won with a 05-06 SP Signature Edition Inkcredible Inkscriptions Magic Johnson /50. Theme Week #29 saw air noname take it with a 07-08 SP Rookie Threads GU auto of Joakim Noah /50 for Rookie auto/jersey numbered to 100 or less. Theme Week #30 is numbered card 25 or less (no autos, GU or rcs) that saw pascuaaaaa win with a 10-11 National Treasures Blake Griffin 1/1 in a close vote. And lastly Theme Week #31 was multi GU that tristan20 won in a landslide submitting a 06-07 UD Black octo GU of Erving/Bird/Malone/Magic/Olajuwon/Drexler/Stohton/Robinson 1/1.

A quick update of those still eligible for the 2011 NBA Lockout Prediction contest are bouncer on 11/2 @ 11 am et, CalvinOnilla on 11/3 @ 2pm et, fitchjr1 on 11/11 @ 11 am et, FootballCardFreak 11/12 @ 11 am et, MasonRaymond0320 on 11/14 @ 4 pm et, FL Henry on 11/14 @ 5 pm et, Turd Ferguson on 11/21 @ 11 pm et, XxViSiOnxX on 11/25 @ 12 pm et, JesRey on 11/28 @ 3 pm et, SingleDaddyof2 on 11/31 @ 4 pm EST. There are 6 more people in December who still have a chance to win and if it lasts till 2012 there are still 9 others eligible. One contest that will be returning in November is the NCAA Guess the Score contests so be sure to check the games, contests and tourneys forum for it because college doesn't have a lockout.

Hobby News

Not much in the way of hobby news this last month due to the NBA lockout. Box prices are coming down as well as some star player cards. Mid to late 90s products are selling well with no new stuff being released from Panini. At the moment Panini is being tight-lipped on any future release dates for their products. The only new product to hit the shelves this last month was 11-12 SP Authentic from Upper Deck which is college stuff. The sticker price for a box is \$120 with 3 guaranteed hits per. 24 packs per box, 5 cards per pack. A 12 box case will deliver 1 6-box inner shipper that has a Michael Jordan or LeBron James autograph and the other 6-box inner shipper will include an autograph from: Michael Jordan, LeBron James, Larry Bird, Bill Russell, Magic Johnson, Julius Erving, Derrick Rose, Rookie 1, or Rookie 2!



NBA News

Here is the current state of the NBA Lockout between the owners and the players.

Oct. 1 – Owners and players union met for 5 hrs which produce some “tense” moments between Dwayne Wade and the commissioner David Stern over salary cap issues.

Oct. 3 – Talks continue while agents send a letter to the players warning of financial damage the current owner’s proposals would cause them.

Oct. 9 – Owners and players meet to try to get an 11th hr deal done before the first cancellation of the season is made.

Oct. 10 – Commissioner David Stern cancels the first 2 weeks of the NBA season. Talks break off when owners offer 47% of BRI (basketball related income) to players.

Oct. 13 – Federal mediator George Cohen set to get involved in talks with owners and players early next week.

Oct 14 – David Stern says Christmas day games could be cancelled if no agreement is reached with mediator.

Oct. 18 – 16 hr marathon talk ends with no deal but continues the next day. Concepts and other issues discussed but no mention of BRI or salary cap.

Oct. 20 – Talks continue Thursday but break-off due to the split over the BRI. Owners want 50/50 while players stand at 53%. No more meetings scheduled.

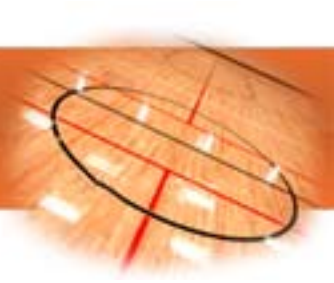
Oct. 24 – NBA plans on canceling 2 more weeks of the season.

Oct. 26 – Owners and players union return to meet. Players lower BRI proposal to 52.5% which is still 100-150 million away from the 50/50 split the owners want. Salary cap system is still a hurdle with key points being length of deal, player contract length and size of player raises.

Oct. 27 – 15 hr talks over salary cap system while both parties agree that revenue split is a road block in discussions and save it till last to discuss.

Oct. 28 – David Stern cancels 2 more weeks of the season till November 30 and says there will not be a full NBA season "under any circumstances." Talks break off again over BRI split.

In other NBA news the exhibition and charity games starring top NBA talent have continued. Durant and Chris Paul’s team defeated Wade and James team on October 1 sponsored by CP3 for his parents alma-mater. Ex-Jazz star Andei Kirelenko signs with a Russian team for 3 yrs with an option to return to the NBA when the lockout ends. Team Wade beats team James in an exhibition game with such stars as Amare, Melo, CP3, Durant, Bosh, Rondo and John Wall all playing. Dwight Howard says he is conflicted over staying or leaving Orlando when his contract is up. Magic Johnson makes headlines after cracking jokes about LeBron James 4th quarter failures in the playoffs. Melo says he would like Chris Paul to join the Knicks to form a “Big 3” in New York if he decides to leave New Orleans. And lastly, a World Basketball Classic was set to be a six-game, two-week, four-continent tour with 18 major NBA stars but got postponed before it started with James, Anthony, Paul and others pulling out of it due to the optimistic labor talks.



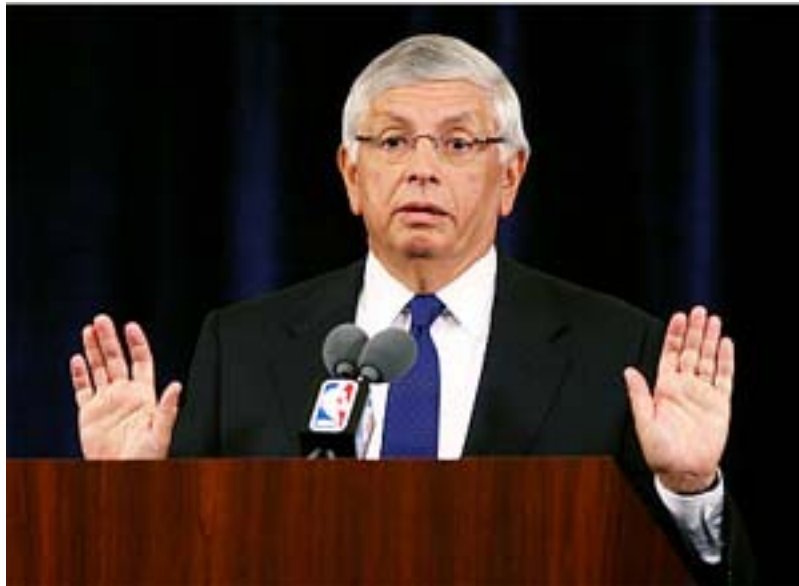
And for you college fans out there North Carolina is ranked 1 in the first preseason AP poll with Kentucky at 2, Ohio St. at 3 and Connecticut at 4 and Syracuse at 5.

ESPN did a player ranking of all the players in the NBA. Here is the Top 10 counting down from 10:

10. Blake Griffin
 9. Deron Williams
 8. Derrick Rose
 7. Kobe Bryant
 6. Kevin Durant
 5. Dirk Nowitzki
 4. Chris Paul
 3. Dwyane Wade
 2. Dwight Howard
 1. LeBron James
- Pack/Box breaks

10-11 Panini Elite Black, National Treasures, Ultimate Collection and SP Authentic were some of the big products still being broke but there were also many old school breaks this last month. RyU pulled a nice Larry Bird GU /99 and a sweet Magic Johnson auto /10 from elite black. Dauber01 bought 2 boxes and got a Hayward/George/Davis triple RC auto /49, Darryl Dawkins auto 4/10, Lamar Odom 2clr patch /25 and a nice David Robinson cut auto 6/10. theGUru had the best luck hitting a Kobe 6/10 auto from Elite Black! National Treasures saw dauber01 hitting a Penny Hardaway 3clr patch /25, Vince Carter auto /25, Gary Neal RPA /99, Isiah Thomas 1/1 base and a sick Kareem Abdul Jabbar HOF patch auto 1/5 out of 2 boxes and then to follow that he pulled a MJ auto /25 from Upper Deck All Time Greats. RtdRSuperstar opened a box of Gold Standard hitting a nice Joe Johnson Gold Nuggets patch auto /15. nuqua did even better pulling a Magic Johnson Golden Age 3clr patch /25 and a sweet Kobe 24KT GU auto /49. lil5up3rman got a Robert Horry auto /75 from a box of Ultimate Collection while MrAnonymous hit a Elgin Baylor auto /25 from the same product. Kenny3011 went big with a 12 box case snagging 2 Derrick Rose autos with 1 #rd to 25(redemption), 2 George Gervin autos 1 #rd to 99, Lynch/Hardaway/Cassell/Cheaney quad auto /15, Dr J auto /25 and a Michael Jordan/Bill Russell dual auto /25 (redemption)!! SlickRegg31 broke 2 boxes of SP Authentic pulling a MJ Supreme Court floor card, Adrian Dantley SOTT auto, Russell Westbrook auto(redemption) and a Derrick Rose by the Letter auto. Gervinator44 got one of the best RC dual autos of John Wall/DeMaRCus Cousins /50 from a box of Season Update.

The new 11-12 SP Authentic hit the market at the end of October with ronfir opening 2 boxes getting 2 Tristan Thompson Jordan Brand Classic GU and 1 GU auto, By the Letter auto of Tubby Smith /30, Home Court Signatures Adrian Dantley, UNC floor card of MJ and SOTT auto /5 of Alec Burks. leedawgs bought a case pulling By the Letter autos /30 of Billy Donovan, Tubby Smith, Bill Cartwright, RC autos of Durrell Summers and Matt Howard, Jordan Brand Classic GU of Tristan Thompson (2), Josh Selby (2) and Malcolm Lee (2), UNC floor of MJ, Worthey (2), Home Court autos of Adrian Dantley and Rick Fox, By the Letter LeBron James /23 and SOTT quad auto of Tom Izzo/Billy Donovan/



Jim Calhoun/Jim Boheim ¼ being the 2 best hits. Velvet Hoop pulled a Josh Selby and Tristan Thompson Jordan Brand Classic GU, J.R. Ried UNC floor card, Bill Cartwright By the Letter auto /25 and a Duke Home Court Signatures floor auto of Nolan Smith from SP Authentic. cardcollecta12 busted 2 boxes also pulling JBC GU's of Scotty Hopson, Malcolm Lee and Tristan Thompson, UNC floor card of Sam Perkins, Home Court signatures of Sam Perkins(UNC) and Christian Laettner (Duke), SOTT JaJuan Johnson, By the Letter autos of Darrell Griffith / 75, Elgin Baylor /75 and Hakeem

Olajuwon "N" 2/5.

Old School breaks saw gervinator44 open several boxes starting with 95-96 Hoops getting a MJ Number Crunchers insert, Grant Hill Top 10 insert and a Grant Hill dunk card. jlcamaroz28 tried a box of 96-97 Skybox ser. 2 hitting RC's of Kobe and Iverson with a tough 1:240 Marbury Golden Touch insert. Hommisan did well with a box of 98-99 Bowman's Best to pull a Dirk Nowitzki RC, Kevin Garnett Best Performers insert and a sweet Mike Bibby Atomic Refractor RC /100. McPUG hit a Michael Jordan Hardwood Honors insert from a box of 98-99 Finest but wasn't done pulling Jordan. He also got a box of 98-99 Upper Deck pulling in a MJ base, MJ HW99 base and checklist, MJ23 insert, MJ23 bronze die-cut insert/2300, Dirk Nowitzki RC and a super Powers Iverson insert. In 2 boxes of 99-00 Finest gervinator44 hit refractors of Penny Hardaway and Jason Kidd, 24KT Touch insert of Penny Hardaway and a Finest Blue of Jason Kidd /1500. gervinator44 and deuluxe each went with a box of 99-00 Fleer Tradition with gervinator44 hitting a Kobe Masters of the Hardwood insert and a Penny Hardaway Game Breakers /100 and deuluxe pulling a Keith Van Horn Net Effect insert 1:96 and Allan Houston 18/20 Supreme Court Collection parallel. gervinator44 pulled a Shaq Middle Men insert, Kobe Player of the Week insert and a Ron MeRCer Autographics from a box of 00-01 Fleer Mystique then a David Robinson Feel the Game sp GU from a box of 00-01 fleer Showcase. McPUG pulled some more MJ from 02-03 UD MVP with a base card, MVP Classic parallel and MJ MVP Moments insert plus a Kobe Basketball Diary insert. JTfloyd hit a sick 1:2500 Game Jersey Patch Numbers Shaq from 04-05 UD. And to finish the breaks McPUG bought 4 \$10 retail cubes netting him a 08-09 Bowman Blue Derrick Rose RC /499(\$60), 07-08 Fleer glossy Kevin Durant RC (\$20)and a Rookie Sensations glossy RC Kevin Durant (\$25), 07-08 Ultra Season Crowns MJ insert and a Vince Carter Topps Turkey Red GU.



Way to Go NBA!

By Stephen Duell aka Spuds1961

First off, let me preface this by saying I'm not too big of a basketball fan to begin with, but these guys are just plain stupid.

I find it hard to sympathize with owners or players who have never worked an honest day of hard work in their lives. The NFL was on the brink of a long strike but in the end they got it right and reached a settlement, way to go NFL! Football is also one of my favorite sports so I was glad to see they salvaged their season. The NBA on the other hand, I could take or leave, especially with all the other sports winter has to offer, hockey, the NFL, or college football.

I really think these people don't have a clue, with the state of the economy and people needing jobs... I have read about Memphis as a city is going to sue the NBA because of this lockout, kudos to them, as I think they are doing the right thing. I am sick of multi-million dollar athletes and mega-rich owners not being able to see the big picture, which is the common employee working at these venues needing their job.

My heart goes out to the college student who uses his job as a vendor to foot the bills for his or her education, or the senior citizen who uses their job as a cashier to supplement their low paying social security to help foot their bills and put food on their table. From what I've been reading the players will not end this strike until the revenue sharing is made 52 % to 48 % in their favor, well guys, get a real job and try this crap! Good luck standing in the unemployment line with the rest of us.

I find it hard to fathom that these players can't survive on the overpaid salaries they make in the first place, and I also find it hard to fathom that these owners aren't making enough money off of their franchise to have tons of money left over. Any owner who can't make money off of their franchise probably doesn't need to be an owner. Just the way any player, even the lowest paid on an NBA roster who most likely makes \$ 200,000 per year needs to re-evaluate their place in life.

What these players and owners don't realize is yes we can live without basketball, but we can't live without the revenue it brings in for the common folk. In an already horrible economy I find it hard to believe that these people can't see the big picture. I mean how hard is it to see how much income it is costing the average employee? Open your eyes players and owners! Yes neither of you wants to blink an eye and settle for something you see as a loss, but in the end, when all is said and done if you guys handle your finances properly everybody will make their fair share of money.

In closing yes I would like to see a settlement, but not for the players and owners but more for Johnny who works as a vendor to have money to pay for his college education, or Jane who works the concession stands to supplement her social security check.

COME ON NBA DO THE RIGHT THING!



The Time For Product Adjustment Has Arrived

By RGM81 aka Richard McAdam

I have been advocating for some time now the need for the NHL Players Association to tell Upper Deck and Panini that it is time to scale back the number of licensed products on the market. This is not simply the lament of a player collector that is overwhelmed by the constant influx of new cards—though that statement certainly applies—but rather the growing concern of a hobbyist that the market is on the road to collapsing underneath its own weight. There is simply too much of everything, and only the NHLPA can do something about it.

This call for cuts is not a sudden realization; I've been calling for them for the better part of a year now. What has prompted this latest call is the fact that, barring a last-minute delay of 2011-12 O-Pee-Chee, Upper Deck will have released three of its allotted 11 products for the season before the season has even begun. Victory was released in August, Artifacts came out in late September, and O-Pee-Chee went live on October 4th. Two of these are low-end products designed for the set collectors and the kids, and both serve a valuable purpose. Artifacts offers a multitude of parallels and memorabilia cards, giving it an early leg up on Panini to get the first game-used pieces of the 2010-11 rookie crop to collectors. In that light, Artifacts is being rewarded with strong sales from those collectors looking to get their hands on P.K. Subban, Taylor Hall, and Jordan Eberle cards that feature rookie-year game-worn jerseys.

While that early competitive advantage has a short-term benefit, over the long haul Artifacts will become just another lost-in-the-shuffle mid-range release. Soon Panini will release Certified, UD will have their staple product out with a more desirable batch of Game Jerseys, and that will leave those “firsts” just a nice memory. Each of the products just mentioned will have the leg up on Artifacts because they will have live rookie cards of the 2011 draft class, boasting the likes of Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Mark Schiefle, and Sean Couturier should they make the opening day rosters of their respective clubs.



Another drawback to having so many products released before the season begins is that these cards will feature players that have switched teams over the summer still depicted with their 2010-11 club. I cannot speak for all collectors, but looking at the O-Pee-Chee checklist and seeing Paul Mara, Jeff Halpern, Benoit Pouliot, James Wisniewski, and Roman Hamrlik as Montreal Canadiens despite all of them no longer being with the team seems very out of place. Nearly one-third of the team set for a 2011-12 product features players that will be playing on

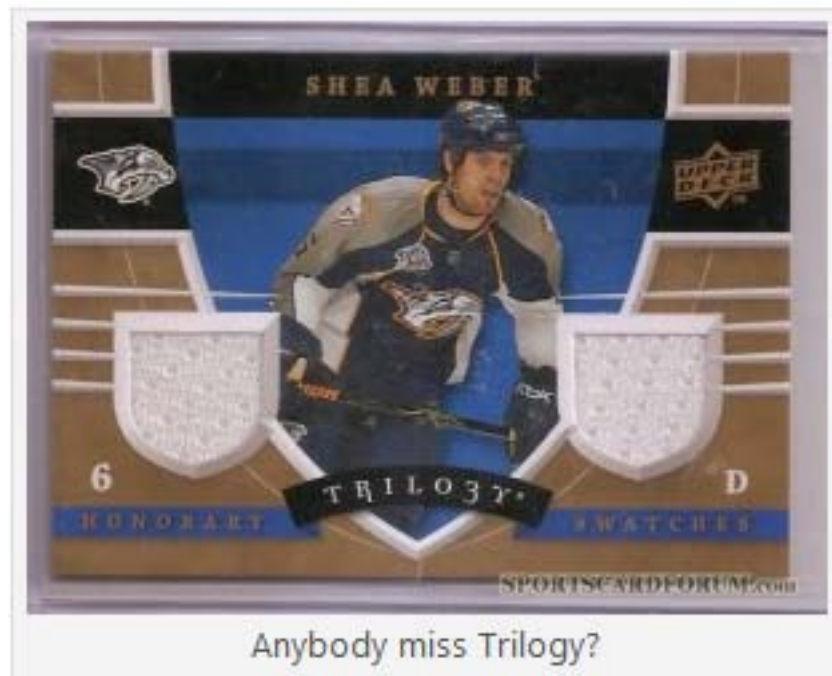


other teams this season, while roster players such as David Desharnais, Hal Gill, and Andrei Markov are not on the checklist, to say nothing of the exclusion of late-season call-ups like Andreas Engqvist. I understand that this happens every season with players who move around on July 1 or thereabouts, but it is nonetheless a problem and dates the product to a time that reduces the relevance of the cards in the set.

So with that being said, what should be done to increase the likelihood of delivering a bigger bang for your hobby buck? Being critical of the status quo is a rather easy thing to do – finding a solution that improves the hobby is a little more difficult. But I believe that we can find answers, and here are three steps that I would recommend:

1. Cut the number of products each company is allotted in half, to 6 each per season.
2. Stagger the releases so that each company can do one in the pre-season if they so desire, but ensure that the majority are released after the season has begun.
3. From those sets which are cut, incorporate the best subsets into what remains.

By reducing the number of products each company can release onto the market each year, there will be far less of a glut on the market of memorabilia and autograph cards. The drop in supply will result in stronger sales for each product that remains, as collectors would no longer have their wallets stretched so thin by the nearly 30 releases we currently endure. The lower number of sets would allow the product development teams at Upper Deck and Panini to channel their energies on increasing the quality of the memorabilia and autograph checklists, as well as the designs of the cards themselves. If players only have to handle a couple dozen au-



Anybody miss Trilogy?

tograph subsets, there will be far fewer redemption cards inserted into products, and even for those problem signers hopefully wait times will be reduced dramatically. Sets that are redundant or do not offer a serious bang will truly not be missed. There will, of course, be some painful decisions made to axe some products that are very popular in the current environment, but the hobby is always able to



move on – three years removed from the last release of Sweet Shot, is anybody still lamenting its demise?

It is important to have a very early-season release to wet people’s appetite for what is to come in the new season. Victory thus has a dual purpose: it is inexpensive and helpful to keep young collectors interested in the hobby by only having them spend a portion of their allowance, and it gives older collectors something to bust while training camps are taking place. But the great majority of the product release calendar should coincide with the regular season and playoffs, and be as current as possible. It is unrealistic to expect that the multitude of players that switch uniforms at the trade deadline will all be depicted with their new teams only a few weeks later, but for those lower-end products that come out in November or December we should be seeing guys that moved around in the off-season with their new teams. There is no good reason to have 4-5 sets in 2011-12 products that show Brad Richards as a member of the Dallas Stars. Fix the release calendar such that there is still at least one licensed product per month from October to June, and aim to get The Cup and Dominion out soon after the Stanley Cup has been awarded to bring closure to the hobby season.

I am a fan of taking good things from products I do not like and adding them to other products that I do like. With fewer products on the market, the companies would have a grand opportunity to make higher-quality releases using the best parts of those products that do not survive the chopping block. Imagine, if you will, Upper Deck bringing back Ice as a standalone product that keeps a strong focus on acetate cards: not only the highly-desirable RC’s #’d /99, but also bring in elements from defunct lines like Trilogy such as Frozen In Time, Ice Scripts, and Clear Cut Combos. They could also incorporate the visually stunning Black Ice memorabilia/autograph cards from UD Black and have a very strong product that would be greater than the sum of its parts. The same could be done with the three products that bear the SP name; a super-set comprised of the strongest parts of SP Authentic (hard-signed autographs), SP Game Used (high-end memorabilia pieces), and SPx (does SPx do anything better than these other two products? I can’t think of anything in it that stands out beyond the Shadowbox inserts) under a single banner would be an incredible product.



So there you have some suggestions about how to make the hobby just a little better. Fewer cards, better products, a more sensible release schedule. I am one who feels that the hobby is currently in a good place but can still find dramatic room for improvement. What do you think?



NHL Predictions: Western Conference
By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan

We're a few weeks into the NHL season, and everyone has played at least seven games now. This does provide a little bit of insight as to how we should expect teams to perform, but with a such a small sample it can also be very misleading. Fact is, nothing that has happened thus far has really changed my opinion of any team in the league. These early games have only served to reaffirm what I already thought, or seem to me as either a hot (or cold) start that won't be sustained.

Like every prognosticator out there, I'll make my best attempt to pick where each team will finish in their respective conferences, while classifying them as one of four types: 'Playoff Locks', 'Playoff Bubble', 'Just Miss', and 'No Chance'.

Pretty simple to explain. The locks are teams that I'm confident will make the playoffs; I might get the spot wrong, but these teams are too good to miss out on post season action. The Bubble teams are ones that I expect will make the playoffs, but will come precariously close to missing. The 'Just Miss' are the opposite of those bubble teams. They'll be in the race right up until the last couple of weeks of the season, but won't be good enough to get in. No Chance is pretty self explanatory. These are the teams with a chance to do nothing other than pick first.

- PLAYOFF LOCKS -

1. Vancouver Canucks.

Not only are the Canucks too good to miss the playoffs, they're simply too good not to win their division, and likely too good not to finish first in the Western Conference. They're playing in a division where they were the only playoff team last year, and that's not likely to change. The lighter schedule will give the Sedin Twins ample opportunity to make their respective runs at the scoring title, and Canucks fans should stop worrying about Roberto Luongo's poor early season play. Statistically, Luongo will continue to be one of the best goalies in the league, even if he's spending October playing like it's the playoffs.



I don't believe Vancouver will be able to march as far in the post season as they did last year (calling for a second round exit right now) but they'll be the number one seed when the playoffs begin.

2. Los Angeles Kings.

The Kings are my pick, not only to win the Pacific Division, but to win the Stanley Cup this year. Already loaded with so many offensive weapons, the trade that brought Mike Richards to L.A. in the



offseason added the right mix of leadership, grit, and secondary scoring to put them over the top. The Defence is built around budding superstars like Drew Doughty and Jack Johnson, and Jonathan Quick provides the strong net minding the Kings will need to go far.

3. Chicago Blackhawks.

Two seasons removed from a championship, I'm sure that this team has finally popped enough Tylenol to cure that Stanley Cup hangover. Led by Jonathan Toews & Patrick Kane, the Hawks have a duet that is matched by very few clubs out there. GM Stan Bowman re-tooled this lineup in the offseason, bringing in guys like Dan Carcillo, Jamal Mayers, and Andrew Brunette. This may be the season when Duncan Keith finally wins his first Norris Trophy, as he leads a defence corps with the likes of Brent Seabrook & Nik Hjalmarsson. Goalie Corey Crawford proved last season that he's a legit starter in this league. This is a team poised for a deep playoff run, so long as they don't run into the Kings too early.

4. Detroit Red Wings

The Red Wings are a year older, and a year further removed from the best seasons of their best players. If I were to jump sports for a moment, they remind a lot of the New York Yankees (without the undisputed history of being the 'best franchise ever, and the ridiculous payroll). They've got several big name players who (based on age) we should all expect to see a drop off in their play. Datsyuk is 33, and hitting that age where his game should decline. Zetterberg is 31, and should see the same. Lidstrom is 41, and now the oldest skater in the league. Thing is, just like the Yankees, I'd be a fool to bet against them.



Age does have its drawbacks, but experience has its benefits. The Red Wings should absolutely be considered a contender, just not as much of one as their younger division rivals in Chicago. This is a team that will make the playoffs. They might get bounced in the first round, and you might see them make it all the way to the conference finals.

5. San Jose Sharks

Always a bridesmaid, never a bride. The Sharks will continue their trend of strong regular season performances this year, but there is nothing here to indicate that they will finally get over that proverbial hump, and win that long coveted Stanley Cup. Joe Thornton & Patrick Marleau pack a formidable 1-2 punch. Augmented by the likes of Ryane Clowe, Logan Couture, Dan Boyle, and Brent Burns; There is no reason to think that the Sharks won't be a force this year, but there is also no reason to expect any different results than we've seen since 2005.

- PLAYOFF BUBBLE -

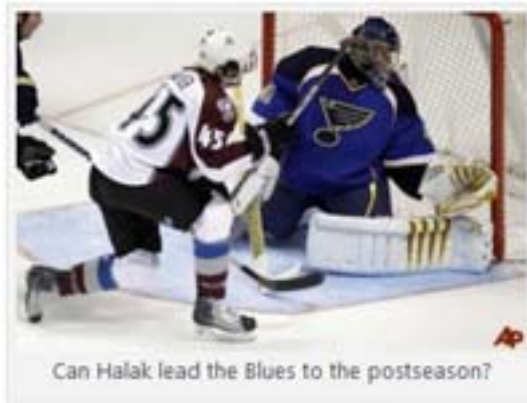


6. Anaheim Ducks

The Ducks should certainly still be considered ‘Mighty’. They have what should be considered the strongest top line in the entire league, with Ryan Getzlaf, Bobby Ryan, and last year’s Hart Trophy winner Corey Perry. These guys can skate, pass, score, and bang, with any line in the league. The problem in Anaheim is the lack of depth. Saku Koivu & Teemu Selanne provide a nice combo for secondary scoring, but the Ducks lack anything close to the defensive depth they possessed in Pronger & Neidermayer when they were Champions in ’06, and they are only a Lubomir Visnovsky injury away from being a total mess on the back end. They have nothing even close to being comparable to the Pahlsson – Niedermayer – Moen line that helped them succeed so well five years ago. The lack of depth here is what kills them. They should make the playoffs, but probably don’t go too far.

7. St. Louis Blues

The first (and only) non-playoff team from the Western Conference in 2010-11 that I’m picking to make the playoffs this year. The Blues were decimated by injuries last year, and never really had a chance to play up to their potential. Off season additions of Jason Arnott and Jamie Langenbrunner added a nice little touch of veteran leadership, to go along with young stars like David Backes, Patrik Berglund, TJ Oshie, and David Perron. A trade deadline deal last season, that brought emerging Power Forward Chris Stewart & rookie Defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk to St. Louis also boosted the Blues’ chances.



Combined with a blue line that already included veteran Barret Jackman and a rising star in Alex Pietrangolo, this is a roster that should be able to compete with anyone. Could they fail? Yes. The Blues are counting on a lot of youth, and inexperienced players to come through. It’s hard for me to imagine the Blues getting very far in the playoffs, but if goalie Jaroslav Halak can recapture that magic he showed in Montreal two seasons ago, the sky is the limit.

8. Nashville Predators

The Preds are the beneficiary of stability. GM David Poile and Head Coach Barry Trotz have been in place since the team’s inception in 1997. These two men have allowed hockey to succeed in what can only be described as a ‘non-traditional market’, despite the dismal failures of their expansion cousins in Atlanta & Columbus. They’ve got one of the game’s best goalies in Pekka Rinne, and a stellar group of defenseman led by Shea Weber & Ryan Suter. They lack any serious scoring thread up front, but a commitment to team defence, and great coaching from Trotz will be enough to get Nashville into the playoffs again.



- JUST MISS -

9. Dallas Stars

The biggest off season move by the Dallas stars was losing their top centre, Brad Richards. Plagued with ownership issues, the once formidable Western Conference powerhouse is now running on a much tighter budget, and simply lacks the star power required to keep playing in hockey's second season. Kari Lehtonen gives them good, but not great, goaltending. Their blue line and their forward group look similar. They've got some decent parts like Loui Eriksson, Brenden Morrow, Steve Ott, and Stephane Robidas, but it's just not going to be enough for any real success.

10. Columbus Blue Jackets

Despite a really slow start (an NHL worst 3 points after the first 9 games) it's only a matter of time before the duo of Rick Nash and Jeff Carter start to light it up. Once these two superstars get comfortable with each other, the wins will start to add up. If goalie Steve Mason can return to his 2008-09 Calder winning form, the Blue Jackets could have a shot to make the playoffs.



Taylor Hall and the Oilers are on the rise

11. Edmonton Oilers

A string of last place finishes should finally be over for the Oilers. With the addition of another first overall pick, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, the Oilers now boast a group of forwards that's just oozing in talent. Nugent-Hopkins, along with Taylor Hall & Jordan Eberle, give the Oilers a trio of budding superstars. A group more talented than anything

they've seen in Edmonton since the 1980s.

The return of fan favourite Ryan Smyth gives this young squad another veteran to rely on, and that can only be a good thing. Their defence is still very thing, and inconsistent goaltending is certain to be an issue for another year. The talent is there that the Oilers could make a push for a playoff berth this year, but the inexperience on their roster means that there's still a shot they could finish near (or at) the bottom again.

- NO CHANCE -

12. Minnesota Wild.

The Wild are a mess. Once upon a time, Jacques Lemaire was able to coach a near talentless Minnesota team to a string of respectable finishes. He did it by preaching a tight defensive system. Lemaire (like all coaches) eventually wore out his welcome, and left after a disappointing 08-09 season. Since then the Wild seem to have abandoned the idea of boring defence, but they haven't done anything to address the lack of strong group of players. Danny Heatley gives them a superstar, but like Marian Gaborik before him, he's but one man on an otherwise below average team.



13. Phoenix Coyotes.

The team owned and operated by the league is going to be hard pressed to repeat their recent success. The Coyotes have made the playoffs the last couple of years, but they did it on the back of Ilya Brysgalov. With their franchise net minder gone to Philadelphia, the Coyotes are going to fall hard in the Western Standings.

14. Calgary Flames.

Saddled by a bunch of bad Darryl Sutter signings, the Flames have a horrible line-up, and are up right against the Salary Cap ceiling. They have no number one centre, an aging (and increasingly ineffective) goalie in Mikka Kipprusoff, and a former superstar in Jarome Iginla who only really seems effective as a perimeter player now, instead of the dominating power forward he was, building his reputation as one of the game's best. To make matters worse, the cupboard is pretty much bare in Calgary too. Other than Mikael Backlund, the Flames have no young stars of note coming up through the system. Dealing Iginla, while he's still worth something, may be the best move here. It worked out well for them in 1995, when the Flames dealt aging vet Joe Nieuwendyk to the Dallas Stars, for recent first round pick Jarome Iginla.



15. Colorado Avalanche.

General Manager Greg Sherman made one huge accomplishment in the offseason. He was able to pull the trigger on a trade that will likely end up making Brian Burke's Phil Kessel blunder look "not so bad". Sherman dealt the Av's 2012 first & second round picks to the Washington Capitals for goalie Semyon Varlamov. Varlamov was the odd man out in Washington, and since the 23 year old has accomplished the square root of nothing in his NHL career, I seriously doubt the Caps hesitated even a little when this offer was made. Colorado is a team that has picked

in the top three twice in the last three years. Despite the addition of likely rookie-of-the-year candidate Gabriel Landeskog, the Avs simply don't have enough talent to come close to the playoffs, and will be lucky to stay out of the basement.





NHL Predictions: Eastern Conference
By Sean McCafferty aka 30 ranfordfan

We're a few weeks into the NHL season, and everyone has played at least seven games now. This does provide a little bit of insight as to how we should expect teams to perform, but with a such a small sample it can also be very misleading. Fact is, nothing that has happened thus far has really changed my opinion of any team in the league. These early games have only served to reaffirm what I already thought, or seem to me as either a hot (or cold) start that won't be sustained.

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- PLAYOFF LOCKS -

1. Washington Capitals

The Capitals should, once again, be the best in the Eastern Conference. The addition of goalie Thomas Vokoun should finally give Washington the strength in the net they've lacked for years. The Caps boast a wealth of talent up front, led by one of the NHL's best in Alexander Ovechkin and fellow Russian Alexander Semin. A strong blue line with the likes of Mike Green and offseason signing Roman Hamrlik should give them a solid, steady group in front of Vokoun.

The Capitals' problem has never been regular season performances though, it's been a disappearing act by their forwards in the playoffs. Until they show me otherwise, I have no reason to believe that Ovechkin, Semin, Backstrom & Company can get it done when it counts. Look for an early exit again.





2. Boston Bruins

The B's won it all last season, and they should be considered serious contenders to do it again this year. The only players of note to leave, would be defenseman Thomas Kaberle and retired winger Mark Recchi. Kaberle was replaced on the blue line with Joe Corvo, and the rise of Tyler Seguin should be more than enough to replace Recchi. If Tim Thomas can continue to defy age, and turn another Vezina calibre performance, the Bruins will be near the top of the conference again. Can they repeat as champs? It will be tough. Nobody has won back to back Cups since Detroit in 1997 and 1998, but Boston is a very hard team to bet against.

3. Pittsburgh Penguins

The biggest question concerning the Penguins to start this season, is the same one they've been asking since January of last year: When will Sidney Crosby be healthy? Fortunately for the Penguins, they're not a one man team. Evgeni Malkin & Jordan Staal provide two exceptionally talented centres that will still be able to get things done in Crosby's absence, goalie Marc-Andre Fleury gives them one of the best net minders in the league, and Kris Letang may very well make a run at a Norris Trophy this year. Crosby does make the difference between the Pens being what should be considered a very good team, and what should be considered Stanley Cup favourites. If Crosby can return and play at the level he was at before the concussion, not only does Pittsburgh win their division, but they could very well be end the season with another Stanley Cup Parade.

4. Philadelphia Flyers.

I cannot recall a time in NHL history, where a team which was only 1 point out of first in their conference, willingly ripped apart the core of its roster, and retooled so much. Centres Jeff Carter & Mike Richards are gone, replaced with young up-and-comers like Brayden Schenn, Sean Couturier, and future hall of famer Jaromir Jagr. Bigger roles of budding stars Claude Giroux and James van Riemsdyk should keep Philly's offense rolling along nicely.



After years of being criticized for going with weak goaltending, the Flyers also signed Ilya Bryzgalov over the summer, finally giving them what appears to be a top tier goalie. The fact that Bryzgalov has never had any post season success should be of concern though. This is a team that will finish high in the regular season. They'll only get as far in the playoffs as Bryzgalov can take them. Neither a Stanley Cup nor a first round exit would surprise me.



- PLAYOFF BUBBLE -

5. Tampa Bay Lightning.

The Lightning have one of the game's best young superstars in Steven Stamkos. They've also got a pair of offensive veterans in Martin St. Louis and Vinny Lecavailer that know how to score, and know how to win. Goaltending is the big question here. Like Tim Thomas in Boston, goaltender Dwayne Roloson continues to ignore what Father Time normally tells athletes of his age. At 42, he's the oldest active player in the league. Overall, this is a young, fast, exciting team. They could be poised for a deep playoff run, but if age does catch up to Roli the Goalie, they could also easily find themselves out of the playoffs all together.

6. Buffalo Sabres.

Aside from maybe Tomas Vanek, there really isn't anyone in the Sabres forward group that jumps out as being a true superstar. That's the way Buffalo has been running their team for years now. They do have a very dangerous group that also features players like former 40-goal man Brad Boyes, and small (but very talented) Derek Roy, Nathan Gerbe, and Tyler Ennis. On defence, they have one of the NHL's best young defenseman in Tyler Myers, complimented well with offseason signing Christian Ehrhoff. Ryan Miller is also a huge factor for the Sabres. Their goalie is widely considered to be one of the absolute best, and gives them a chance to win every night.

7. New York Rangers.

Like the Buffalo Sabres, the Rangers best player is their goalie: Henrik Lundqvist. King Henrik gives the Rangers a chance to win every time he plays. The problem is that they may play him a little too often. 68 games last year was the fewest he'd played since his rookie year in 2005-06. In between he had four straight years with 70 or more games.

The Rangers other marquee name is free agent signing Brad Richards. The best player available this past July 1, he brings better than point-per-game potential, and a track record that includes a Stanley Cup with the Tampa Bay Lightning. The Rangers also have emerging stars like Brandon Dubinsky, Marc Staal, and team captain Ryan Callahan. This is a club that has the potential to be very good. If Lundqvist doesn't get too overworked, the Rangers have a chance to go on a very good playoff run.





8. New Jersey Devils.

The Devils were a laughing stock for much of last season, before becoming the NHL's hottest team over the last couple of months. The talent here is simply too good to have a repeat of last year's disaster. Zack Parise returns after a year away with injury, and Ilya Kovalchuk will continue to try and justify his huge contract. Martin Brodeur is another player that I have a hard time betting against. Age may be catching up to him, but how can anyone believe that he'll have a repeat of last year? In addition to all the vets, the Devils also have recent 4th overall pick Adam Larsson. The defenseman adds yet another dimension to the team. One of the knocks on the Devils over the last few years has been their inability to replace long time stars like Stevens, Neidermayer, and Rafalski on the blue line. Larsson's talent finally gives them that chance.

- JUST MISS -

9. Montreal Canadiens.

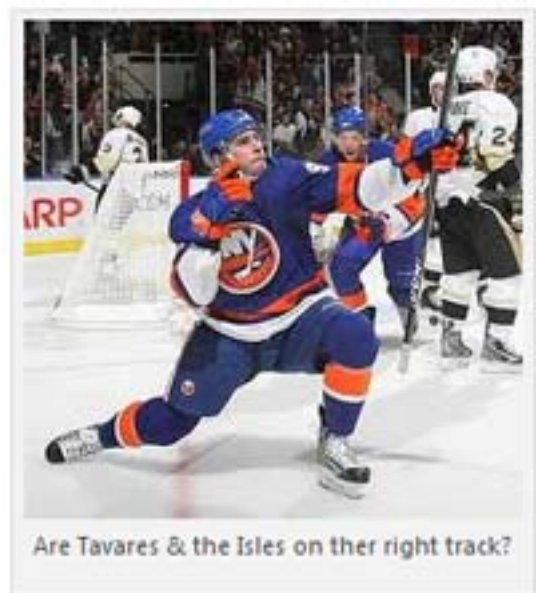
Les Habitants have a good team, but they just reek of a club that will be bit by the injury bug. Last season Andrei Markov missed most of the year, which has become too usual for him. Mike Cammalleri has missed 14 or more games in three of the last four years. Both Josh Gorges and Max Pacioretty missed substantial time last year with injuries, and while it's not yet fair to call them injury prone, it is fair to question how effective they'll be after missing most of the 2010-11 season. Goalie Carey Price gives Montreal an outstanding player between the pipe, but I don't think that's going to be enough to get them in. Regarded as an undersized team, I just feel the injuries are going to mount up too high this time.

10. Carolina Hurricanes.

The Hurricanes are a lot like the Canucks and Capitals. Perennial underachievers. Problem in Raleigh is that they don't wait for the playoffs to choke, they seem to find a way to have a couple of lengthy slumps during the season, and blow their chances long before the play-offs start. With players like Eric Staal, goalie Cam Ward, and last season's rookie of the year Jeff Skinner, the 'Canes could easily be a playoff team this year, but their penchant for bad play in the regular season will keep them on the outside of the postseason.

11. New York Islanders.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel on Long Island. The Islanders have built a great group of young forwards, led by 2009 First Overall pick John Tavares, and a pair of 30 goal scorers last year, Michael Gabner and Matt Moulson. If Nino Niederreiter, Kyle Okposo and Josh Bailey can start to play at a level worthy of their high draft positions, New York could suddenly look very good.





Goaltending here is still a mess, with Rick DiPietro finding new ways to get hurt every time he gets healthy. Do these Isles have enough to get into the post season? Probably not, but GM Garth Snow is heading in the right direction.

- NO CHANCE -

12. Toronto Maple Leafs.

Brian Burke will spend yet another season proving that he's the most overrated General Manager in the NHL. Despite the hot start they've had, this is simply a team that is not talented enough to make it to the playoffs. The Leafs have what may be the worst group of Centers in the league. They've got a nice collection of defenseman, but none who ever show much consistency. Captain Dion Phaneuf can look like a Norris Trophy candidate one week, only to look like he should be in the AHL the next. Aside from Phil Kessel & Mikhail Grabovski, the leafs have no forwards that are going to be challenging for even 60 points, unless you believe Clarke MacArthur wasn't a fluke. I don't. Pinning their hopes on James Riemier is going to come back to haunt them. This is a goalie that was an unknown this time last year. The fact that he looked good during what can only be described as 'garbage time' last year (that's when a team is pretty far out of it late in the season, so other teams stop taking them seriously) doesn't prove anything.

13. Ottawa Senators.

Not only will the Leafs be bad this year, but their cross province rivals in Canada's Capital are going to make sure the battle of Ontario stays rather boring this year. Daniel Alfredsson is on his last legs as an NHL star, and while he can still contribute, he's not the same Alfie that led the Sens to a Stanley Cup final before the lockout. With only 54 games played last year, the injury bug also seems to be slowing down the team's Captain. Jason Spezza is the one guy in Ottawa that may still have all-world talent. The problem he's got is that the collection of wingers he's got to play with don't stack up well with the rest of the league. The tandem of Craig Anderson and Alex Auld in net will prove to be a bad idea, as neither of them are particularly good. The collection of young players they've built, including Bobby Butler, Peter Regin, Jared Cowen, David Runblad, and Robin Lehner tells me that this team could be good again in a couple of years. 2011-12 is going to be ugly though.

14. Florida Panthers.

It started off so well in Florida. An expansion team in 1992-93, they made it all the way to the Stanley Cup finals in just their fourth year, 1995-96. That was the first of only three post season trips in the team's history. The fact that the club's all time leading scorer, Olli Jokinen, never played a single playoff game in his time there, tells you all you need to know about how the Panthers have been run. This season will be no different. With a rookie goalie (Jacob Markstrom) and a couple of backups in Scott Clemmensen and Jose Theodore, they're certainly not a team that's built from backend out. They don't have a single forward that I'd expect to challenge for 30 goals this year, and while they have some nice names on the blueline, Brian Campbell and Ed Jovanovski's biggest contribution this year will be pushing the team over the salary cap floor.



Going to be a long season in Winnipeg

15. Winnipeg Jets.

There is probably no group of fans in the league that will be more excited to see NHL hockey this year than the ones in Winnipeg. I hope that NHL hockey in itself is enough to satisfy them though, because this is going to be a bad club. The Atlanta Thrashers finished 12th in the Eastern Conference last year, and since their transplant to Canada they've done nothing to improve the team. The fact that ownership seemed more concerned with hiring management with Winnipeg connections, instead of doing a true talent search meant that nobody should have been surprised when they did the same thing with coaching, and then with players. To compound their problems, this poor squad has to play out of the Southeast Division, despite being located in North-Western Canada. The travel schedule virtually assures that this bad team from last year will only get worse.





The Greatest Pitcher You Don't Know
by Drew Pelto, AKA *censored*

Some called him Lefty.

Some called him Red.

Some called him crazy.

George Brunet was a well-traveled pitcher, and one you've probably never heard much about; mostly because he was a pretty good pitcher who got stuck on some really bad teams. Over a major league career that went through parts of fifteen seasons, George compiled a record of 69-93 with a 3.62 ERA and 921 strikeouts.

There's not a whole lot of anything up in Keweenaw County, MI. Sure, there's fishing and hunting, old copper mines and the logging industry, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. Michigan Technological University is just a short drive down US 41. But in an area known more for record snowfalls, one would expect hockey and skiing to be the big sports, not baseball.

"It was on my 15th birthday," Brunet later recalled. "I was fishing... I wandered over to one of the games they played in Ahmeek. They needed a pitcher. Most of those guys were a lot older than I was, and I had on my fishing boots with the hobs on them. But damned if I didn't go out there and throw a no-hitter." The sport was popular in the limited summers up north, and in 1953 upon graduating from Calumet High School, George was scouted and signed by the Detroit Tigers.

As a side note, another famous Calumet High School alum in the world of sports? George Gipp, as in "Win one for the Gipper."



Brunet made his professional debut in the Tar Heel League with the Shelby Clippers down in North Carolina. He appeared in only seven games for 19 innings, striking out 17, but he walked 15, and had an ERA of 8.05. Control wasn't his strong suit early on: even after reaching the majors, he was involved in an 11-run inning in 1959 where the Chicago White Sox had only one hit. Brunet, brought in with the bases loaded, walked two batters, hit the next, walked another, struck the next guy out, walked two more, then got out of the inning with a grounder back to him. After the inauspicious start, the Clippers pretty quickly said "Thanks, but no thanks," and then it was off to Louisiana



and the Philadelphia Athletics organization. Then Oklahoma. Arkansas. Oklahoma again. Texas. Louisiana. South Carolina. That's a pretty good chunk of travel time for a kid who had never been further from home than a trip across the lake to Ontario. By now, George was a grizzled 21-year old veteran; at least as grizzled as one can be at that age.

In 1956 came the first Major League contract with the now-in-Kansas City A's and the string of bad teams in the show began. In only his second game with the A's, the lefty was called in with the bases loaded... and got Ted Williams to ground out. Brunet said he was shaking upon getting back to the dugout; he didn't realize he was pitching to his hero until he had an 0-2 count on him. The next day, Williams told him "Kid, if you keep that fastball down, you've got a long career ahead of you." Little did he know...

From Kansas City, George went on to Little Rock, Buffalo, and Portland in between sporadic calls up to the A's, including the previously mentioned nightmare of an inning where the White Sox hung up 11 runs on a single hit. In 1960, it was off to Louisville and Milwaukee following a trade to the Braves, then Vancouver, then another trade, this time to Houston with some time in Oklahoma City and Hawaii. In 1963, It was off to the Orioles, and then out to California in 1964.

In the offseason, it was always back to Michigan, living in tiny New Allouez... right next door to my dad. After the 1963 season, George came back with a batting practice ball signed by the whole Orioles team. Along with Brunet are signatures from Hall of Famers Brooks Robinson, Luis Aparicio, and coach Luke Appling. The ball still sits in my dad's collection today, along with about seven of Brunet's ten cards.

An article in Sports Illustrated in 1980 shows just how bad the teams were that Brunet pitched on in the majors— of the nine major league teams he appeared in games with, six are now known by different names. Over fifteen seasons, he was on only one playoff team— the 1971 Pirates in his final season in the show. Even in the minors, the guy couldn't catch a break. In Little Rock in 1957, George had a stretch of over 50 innings where his team failed to give him a single run of support. His record went from 10-3 to 10-11 in that span. He finished the season at 14-15, one loss away from the league lead, but he did lead the league in a positive category, striking out 235 batters.

"George had the unfortunate luck to pitch with second-division clubs most of his career," said sports historian Bob Erkkila. "Otherwise, I think he would have gone on to bigger things."

In 1970, Brunet ended up with the Washington Senators. His manager? Ted Williams. "Long career ahead of you" indeed.

Brunet gets a couple mentions in the seminal baseball tome Ball Four by Jim Bouton. Bouton said of



the Seattle Pilots' acquisition of Brunet, "He'll fit right in on this ballclub. He's crazy." Bouton later discovered Brunet had a habit of not wearing underwear. "Hell, the only time you need them is if you get into a car wreck," George said. "Besides, this way I don't have to worry about losing them." According to other witnesses and George himself, no cup either. "Getting out of the way of ground balls up the middle has cost me a few singles over the years," he said.

After the Pirates traded him to the Cardinals who released him, George bounced around the minors. He spent 1971 and 1972 in Hawaii, then 1973 in Eugene, Oregon who cut him in the midst of financial woes. Faced with the likelihood of having to retire and make his way back to Michigan, living out the days fishing and hunting, instead George kept at the game he loved, coaching youth ball in Anaheim. Then at the age of 37, Chico Carrasquel brought him to Mexico and George's career was reborn. After fifteen Major League seasons, Brunet went on to toss another sixteen in the Mexican Leagues.

As much as George wanted to keep his career going, his heart wasn't in it. Literally, not figuratively. In 1981, he suffered a heart attack, but recovered and kept on going for the majority of the decade, pitching for Coatzacoalcos. At 54, he finally hung up the spikes, but stayed in Mexico and kept on coaching, managing, and working baseball clinics with the kids in Poza Rica. Incredibly, he only suffered any sort of arm trouble once: a blood clot in 1958 that kept him out for two weeks. While some guys can pitch forever (Jesse Orosco comes to mind here), most do it as relievers for the later part of their careers, if not the majority, or the entirety. George spent his whole time as a starter.

"I played with and for George in Poza Rica," said Craig Ryan of George's player-manager days. "If you bunted on him and made him leave the mound, the next time up you'd better be loose because he would keep throwing at you till he got you."

George's zaniness may have been part of the reason he was stuck on bad teams. In 1959, ready to be the A's fifth starter, George found himself outside a team hotel in Florida directing traffic at 3 am after a night out with teammates. Unfortunately, one of those cars had the team's manager and GM inside. After showing up late for a meeting the next day, Brunet was suddenly shipped to the minors, then off to Milwaukee where he and Bob Buhl made quite a pair of wild and crazy guys. Legend has it that when Buhl was warned on a road trip that anyone not in their hotel room at midnight would be fined \$500, he pulled out his wallet, handed the manager the cash, and got off the bus.

Even out in California when Bill Rigney gave him a chance to shine, he managed to get on the manager's bad side. "One time I really got angry when he took me out, and we had words in the dugout," George recalled. "Rigney starts counting, '\$100, \$200, \$300.' I didn't stop until he hit \$700. Then I went in and tore the clubhouse apart. The next day I came in and wrote out a check for \$700 to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Fund."

Twenty years ago today, at age 56, George Brunet died in Mexico following his second heart attack. He



was just two years removed from a thirty-seven year career that took him to thirty cities in three countries. His totals of at least 3,175 strikeouts in the minor leagues, 55 shutouts in the Mexican Leagues, and 37 seasons pitched still stand as records today. He was inducted into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan Sports Hall of Fame in 1993 and the Mexican Salon de la Fama in 1999. His photo is on the cover of the 1985 SABR publication Minor League Baseball Stars, Volume II.

Quotes and info from the following:

<http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1123694/4/index.htm>

<http://www.mininggazette.com/page/content.detail/id/510207.html?nav=5009>

<http://www.hardballtimes.com/main/article/the-tht-interview-george-brunets-left-arm/>





Graded Cards Anyone?
By Karine Hains aka Pheebz888

SCF prides itself with not only being the best sports cards trading and discussion site online but also with providing help and advice to its members. On top of that, we also offer various services such as escrow trading, group breaks, card cash pack sales and more recently, Beckett bulk grading submissions. You want to see how it works and how much it could cost you to submit cards? Check out this thread: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1444542>. The results of this thread are in and you can see some of them in the pictures below. If you are interested in taking part in the next bulk submission, keep your on SCF and you should see something pop-up in the first two weeks of 2012!

