

April 2012

# Collector's Corner

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# SPORTCARD & MEMORABILIA

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Will Sidney Crosby hoist the Cup again?



## How Things Change By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

Things change...this is a fact of life. It's true in life and it's true in sports as well. Need examples? Just read through this month's issue. Just last year, no-one would have seen the St. Louis Blues as potential Cup contenders, just last month, no-one would have thought the Colts would be Manningless and just last week Pierre Gauthier still had a job. Hopefully, these changes will keep on happening as it keeps the world of sports fresh and new for us all. Personally, there is one significant change I really want to see happen: I want Quebec City to get its team back. Word is the NHL has had enough of trying to make it work in Phoenix and just a week ago, it was confirmed that the work on a new NHL calibre arena would start in Quebec City in September. During that press conference, not a single mention was made of a possible return of the NHL to provincial capital. Why? Simply because Pierre-Karl Peladeau understood the message when Gary Betman said he really appreciated the discretion of the Winnipeg group and that it had gone a long way towards helping them get their team back.

Fast forward 5 little days and it was the turn of the Montreal Canadiens to make the headlines. Geoff Molson, the team's President, announced that Pierre Gauthier had been fired and that Bob Gainey had also parted ways with the club. Molson did not make an announcement as to the identity of the new General Manager though but he did tell the fans that he hired Serge Savard to help him choose the next GM. When asked to comment on his new post, Savard stated that it was important that the new big boss of the Habs spoke French and that the Canadiens had forgotten their roots in recent times but that with the Nordiques' return to the NHL, it was important to go back to these roots so that the Quebec City team wouldn't become the province's team ahead of the Canadiens. That declaration made every single Nordiques fan smile and the hope is growing ever stronger that there will be NHL hockey in Quebec come September.



In fact, now the newspaper headlines are dominated by one thing; with which team will Patrick Roy make his return to the NHL as a head coach? When the next season starts, at what end of the Jean Lesage highway will he be living and working? I sincerely hope that he will be back in the fold with the Habs but should he decide to wait for Quebec's re-entry in the

NHL, I'll still be happy that my favorite player ever is back in the big league!



## April 2012

At the time of going to press, the dates were accurate but as you know, they do change a lot...

### Baseball

04/04 Topps Museum Baseball  
04/18 Topps Gypsy Queen Baseball  
04/25 Panini Limited Baseball

### Football

04/04 Panini National Treasures Football  
04/06 Panini Playbook Football  
04/24 Upper Deck Football  
04/28 Leaf Valliant Football

### Hockey

04/03 Upper Deck SP Authentic Hockey  
04/12 Upper Deck SP Game Used Hockey  
04/12 Panini Elite Hockey  
04/21 Upper Deck SPx Hockey  
04/25 Panini Contenders Hockey





## Milestone Collection By Lisardo Augustin aka xarzy



I was into the hobby during the late 90s while growing up in New York and I got into the Bulls and the Knicks.

I never had the privilege of owning an Ewing autograph. As I got older and reconnected with the hobby, I decided it was time to acquire one, so I looked into my options. Patrick Ewing has a limited selection of Certified Autographs. One day while searching eBay I stumbled upon an authenticated 1991 NBA Hoops Dream Team Auto of Patrick Ewing /1992. It was listed at a high "Buy it now" so I didn't acquire it. But it did spark my interest in this set. Where there more autographs?

I started inquiring within the collecting community about the existence of Jordan Dream Team autos and the different certified Dream Team autograph sets. I had only 1 option if I was to go Certified and that was with Panini but that meant no Jordan.

After a few days of inquiring, I located a seller who had a Karl Malone, David Robinson and Patrick Ewing Autographed 1991 NBA Hoops cards for sale. I talked with the owner of the cards and compared the autographs with certified examples and came to the conclusion that they were the real thing. After closing the deal on the lot, the obsession was on. I knew I had to find and assemble this set.

While growing up one of my biggest hobby items was an 8x10 Jordan vs. Penny Hardaway (Jordan Signed) photo. During my father's divorce I lost this treasured Michael Jordan autograph. It left a big void in my hobby life since it was a gift from my father and it was the centerpiece of my collection. So I had decided that I wanted to reacquire a Jordan Auto.

While searching for cards I needed for the set, I would end up at the PSA website quite frequently looking at pop reports to find out what had been authenticated and how many were floating around. I had seen that there was a Michael Jordan already authenticated and I knew that if I was going to finish the set that I would have to find it or worst case scenario, send someone to Jordan camp to get it done.

After 3.5 months and 10/14 cards acquired I had located 3/4 missing cards in Ryu's collection and by a miracle on God's green Earth, the sole 1991 NBA Hoops Jordan that had been authenticated by PSA had surfaced on eBay.



At this time, my wedding anniversary was coming around and my wife, knowing I was working on the set and only needed the Jordan, started getting very interested in the set. Asking questions like, who where these people, why are they so important, what's the value of the Jordan/set, what is the difference between this Jordan auto and any other?

I answered her questions and a few days later she sat me down to tell me something important. She had thought deep and hard and wanted me to talk to the seller of the card; she wanted to buy it for me as an Anniversary Present - WOW.

A couple of hours later the card had been negotiated and paid for and the day of our Wedding Anniversary- March 12<sup>th</sup>. She presented it to me.



I Contacted RYU to negotiate a deal for what was now the last 3 missing cards and voila, the 4 month race to completing the 1991 NBA Hoops Autographed Dream Team Set was completed. Now all that waits is sending them out to PSA for slabbing and Authenticating.

Now I get to sit back and appreciate how loving and understanding my wife is and how great it feels to have tackled such a memorable set.





## NHL Western Conference Playoffs Preview

By Sean McCafferty aka 30Ranfordfan

With teams having about ten games remaining, now appears to be a great time to look back on my early season predictions, see how badly I called this year's NHL race to unfold, and make a few bold predictions as to what will happen between now and when Lord Stanley's Mug is handed out.

My early season predictions for the Western Conference had a nice mix of accuracy, and being totally off base.

Of the five teams I considered to be play-off locks, four of them are looking very good. Vancouver and Detroit are sitting in very comfortable spots, as is Chicago. Los Angeles has pulled into the lead in the Pacific, a spot they should finish in, but are in a dog fight to hold it down and even make the playoffs.



Can the Sedins lead Vancouver back to the finals?

The San Jose Sharks are sitting in tenth place, which has to be a failure for them – no matter how you look at it. They're only one point out of a playoff spot though, and two from tying those Kings for top of their division.

Two of the three teams I called bubble teams are sitting in playoff spots. St Louis is leading the conference and has all but locked up a spot. Nashville has put together another strong season, and are looking more than capable of sustaining their success in the post season. Anaheim, who I also thought had too much talent to fail, is ten points out and all but finished.

I never expected Edmonton or Columbus to make the playoffs, but I didn't expect them to continue to sit in the basement. Their fourteenth and fifteenth places in the standings adds yet another year of misery to the teams' recent history. I expected Dallas to be just outside the playoff picture, and as of right now they're just inside it, hanging onto eighth place.

Half the teams I picked to have no chance are making me look smart. Minnesota are almost as bad as the Oilers, and the Flames only slightly better. I expected Colorado and Phoenix to be long out of the race by now, but both have played much better than I gave them credit for. The Coyotes are sitting in seventh, and the Avalanche, in ninth, are only a point back of them.



How is it all going to end up? I think very close to what's in place now, but with a switch in position for a few teams. The playoff bracket is going to look like this:

1. St. Louis Blues
2. Vancouver Canucks
3. Los Angeles Kings
4. Nashville Predators
5. Detroit Red Wings
6. Chicago Blackhawks
7. San Jose Sharks
8. Dallas Stars



This is going to create four interesting matchups.

The St. Louis Blue will be the heavy favorite when they draw the Dallas Stars in the first round. Rightfully so. Since the hiring of Ken Hitchcock, the Blues have been on a tear. They should have no trouble making short work of the Stars, winning the series in five games.

The Vancouver Canucks had been perennial choke artists in the playoffs, and star goalie Roberto Luongo's mental toughness has often come into question. A march all the way to Game Seven of the finals last year has, at least partially, undone much of those thoughts. A first round matchup with the San Jose Sharks will not be a cake walk for them, but they should be able to come out of this one winning in six games.

Only a couple of years removed from winning the Stanley Cup, the same core of players still remain in Chicago. Lackluster goaltending has prevented them from ever turning into the powerhouse that everyone expected them to become. They'll match up against the third seed, Pacific winning Los Angeles, who will be where they are on the back of a great goaltender. Jonathan Quick has pushed the Kings back into a spot near the top of the conference, and he should be more than capable of handling the Hawks. Don't expect this one to be a short series, but expect the Kings to win this one in six.

The four vs. five matchup should be the best of the Western first round. Two dominating home teams (with really good road records too) facing off. Detroit have been Cup Contenders for nearly two decades, and with good reason. The team may be getting a bit older, but a group of players featuring the likes of Zetterberg, Datsyuk, and Lidstrom should not be taken lightly. The Predators possess what is probably the best 1-2-3 combination in the backend. Goalie Pekka Rinne, and defensemen Shea Weber



& Ryan Sutter. The recent addition of Russian Winger Alexander Radulov, who returned from Russia after four years in the KHL, gives them a weapon up front that they have never really had. I expect the home team to win each game in this series, and with the Predators having four games in Nashville, expect them to win in seven.

The second round will see the Blues play favorite once again, but this time their spectacular season will come to an end. Expect the fourth place Predators to continue their dominance on home ice, but also get a road win this time around. They're well coached, highly skilled, and due for a playoff breakthrough. Predators win this matchup in six games.

The Canucks will find themselves in familiar territory, playing favorite in yet another playoff series. This time Vancouver's ugly playoff history will come back to haunt them. The Kings have enough skill to match the Canucks line-for-line, they just haven't played like it all year. With a hot run while driving for the playoffs, and a first round victory already under their belts – look for momentum to carry the Kings past a tired looking opponent.

Music City vs Tinsel Town. I'm not sure this would be been my bet at the beginning of the season (I can actually assure you it wouldn't have been) but Predators vs Kings for the Western finals should be a good one. I expect Jonathan Quick to be in fine form for Los Angeles, but I expect Kopitar & company to be shut down by the Predators. It will be a low scoring, heavy hitting affair, and Shea Weber's Predators are going to come out on top. Nashville wins the series in six.

Unfortunately for the Predators, that will be the last series they win this year. While nobody will be able



to discount the idea that a berth in the Stanley Cup finals should be considered a success, only making it, and not winning it, will be a bitter disappointment to both the players and the fans. I don't expect to see Nashville lose a home game to a Western Opponent, but I think a trip to the finals means a date with Pittsburgh. The Penguins simply have too much firepower for the Predators to handle. It won't be a quick series, but it won't go the distance either. Sidney Crosby and his Pittsburgh Penguins will capture their second Stanley Cup in the last four year.



## NHL Eastern Conference Playoffs Preview

By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan

With teams having about ten games remaining, now appears to be a great time to look back on my early season predictions, see how badly I called this year's NHL race to unfold, and make a few bold predictions as to what will happen between now and when Lord Stanley's Mug is handed out.

My early season predictions for the Eastern Conference had a nice mix of accuracy, and being totally off base.

Of the four teams I considered to be playoff locks, three of them are looking very good. Boston, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia are all in comfortable spots, but the team I pegged to win the East's regular season crown is fighting for its life... The Washington Capitals continue to bounce in and out of the final spot, hardly the lock I considered them to be.

Half the bubble teams I expected to make the playoffs look like they will. The New York Rangers are sitting in first place (obviously not a bubble team, but in the playoffs none the less) and the New Jersey Devils looked poised to make it as well. The Tampa Bay Lightning now look to have an impossible hill to climb, and will miss the post season. The Buffalo Sabers are making things very interesting down the stretch, but it's going to be too little too late.

The three teams I predicted to be just outside the playoff picture: Montreal, Carolina, and the New York Islanders, are all very far out. In two cases I expect perennial underachievers (NYI, CAR) to take a small step forward, and in the other I expected a perennial bubble team to miss. They are actually the worst three teams in the conference.

This leaves four teams I completely wrote off before the season began. The Toronto Maple Leafs, after a great first half, have done their best to prove me right. Only race they're in anymore is the one to stay out of the basement. The Winnipeg Jets, a team I expected to be nowhere near the playoff picture, are

just on the cusp of making it. A dominant home record has them in ninth place, with a real shot at extending their season.



Ottawa has defied expectations, and instead of being near the bottom of the league they're sitting in a comfortable playoff spot. Florida should be considered the surprise of the league. Instead of assuming their regular position at the bottom of the league, they're winning their division and should expect to get at least a couple of home playoff dates.

How much will things change before the post season actually begins? I don't think much. In fact, I don't think at all. The playoff bracket is going to look like this:



1. New York Rangers
2. Boston Bruins
3. Florida Panthers
4. Pittsburgh Penguins
5. Philadelphia Flyers
6. New Jersey Devils
7. Ottawa Senators
8. Washington Capitals

This is going to create four great matchups.

The New York Rangers will be heavily favored against the Washington Capitals, like all #1 seeds are. If the Capitals can finally get things clicking though, they shouldn't be considered pushovers. With Alex Ovechkin, they've got one of the most explosive players in the entire league. I don't think it will be enough though, and I suspect the Rangers will win a short, but hard fought, five game series.

The Boston Bruins will matchup against their division rivals, the Ottawa Senators. This appears to be the most obvious choice of the bunch, as it is very hard to bet against the defending champs, especially when they may have an even better team this year. While I hate predicting sweeps, this could very well be one. I'll give the Sens a little credit, and bank on them to pick up a single win at home, with the Bruins winning this one in five.

Watching the New Jersey Devils take on the Florida Panthers will once again provide more ammunition for the argument that teams should just be ranked one through eight, instead of giving the division winners a top three seed. The Panthers, while a great story, are clearly a team that should be in the bottom half of the bracket. Expect the Devils, with future hall of famer Martin Brodeur still tending net, to come out of this one with a victory in six games.

That leaves us with the battle of Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh Penguins taking on the Philadelphia Flyers. This should be as good a first round matchup as we've seen in recent memory.



Can Ryan Callahan lead the Rangers to playoff success?



Bryzgalov will be key to the Flyers chances



The Flyer's ability to keep this one close will depend on offseason acquisition Ilya Brysgalov, and how he performs in the Philadelphia goal. He's been nothing short of a disappointment all season, but a strong playoff performance will make fans forget about that in a hurry.

The Penguins chances for success this post season can be summed up with two words: Sidney Crosby. They're a fourth place team without him, and are arguably the best team in the league with him. If he comes back and is as good as ever, expect the Penguins win. My bet: with Crosby back in the lineup, Penguins win the series in six.

Those four series set up what will be even more exciting second round matchups. The Rangers will get to host their cross-river rivals, the New Jersey Devils. This is finally the time when Brodeur does not get the better of them, and you'll see the Rangers run though the Devils pretty quickly, winning in five games.

The defending champs in Beantown, facing the best player on the planet in Steeltown, will make for what may be the best series of this year's playoffs. This is when I expect last year's playoff success, and the extra games that come with it, to finally catch up to Boston. Expect Pittsburgh to win a grueling series, eking this one out in seven games.

Penguins vs Rangers for the Eastern conference finals. Not only should this be a great series for fans, but it will also be a great one for the league. Having Crosby back in the spotlight, playing against one of the league's premier franchises, should be a boom for ratings. Expect Crosby, Malkin, & co. to be at their best, and get back to the Stanley Cup finals with a six game victory over the Rangers.

What does this leave for the Finals? If Pittsburgh can really get there, nobody in the west is going to be able to stop them. Sidney Crosby makes his comeback complete, and ends the season off with his second championship.





## Restoring the Lion's Pride - The Future of the Montreal Canadiens

By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

When I was a young hockey fan, one of the first books I ever read about the Montreal Canadiens was *Lions in Winter*, written by Chrys Goyens and Allan Turowetz. When reading it, one cannot help but be



GM Pierre Gauthier must be removed from his role  
as soon as possible

overcome with a sense of aura and mystique about Les Glorieux. You read the tales of Maurice Richard, Jean Beliveau, Guy Lafleur, and Patrick Roy, and how these men led their teams to championship glory. The tremendous “*élan*” of the great Canadiens teams of the past put the club and the organization on a different level than their competitors; the Habs are not just another hockey team, they are much more than that. They are special. They are a cultural institution, within the province of Quebec and across Canada. The pomp and circumstance of the team’s Centennial season was a great reminder of all of the dignity, grace, elegance, and pride with which the franchise carried itself for so much of its first 100 years.

Today, however, much of that reputation has been left in tatters. Numerous moves made in the past

year at the organizational level have done much to tarnish the image of the Canadiens as a first-class franchise, while at the same time the on-ice product has resulted in the worst home record in the entire NHL. The organization and the team have both fallen from grace, as the circus atmosphere surrounding the Canadiens has been dialled up to the 3rd degree throughout the past twelve months. Much of this is hysteria created by certain quarters of the Montreal media, but even if all of that is stripped away, we still see the portrait of an organization that has made bad decisions and followed them up with panicked decisions, further exacerbating the problems and feeding into the negativity that the media hounds use to fan the flames of hysteria. It is a downward spiral that has alienated large segments of the fan base, who have gone through numerous stages of grief and ultimately arrived at a sense of ennui for the final quarter of the season. With the team’s playoffs chances essentially nil by the start of March, the fans are already looking forward to the 2012-13 season and the organizational housecleaning which must transpire to restore pride in the Montreal Canadiens.



Before the on-ice product can be improved, the architects of the current squad must be removed as soon as the final horn sounds against the Toronto Maple Leafs on April 7th. For the first time in five years, the Canadiens will not be playing post-season hockey, and this is something which is unacceptable in an organization where the stated objective every season is to win the Stanley Cup. The Canadiens do not hang division championship banners in the rafters of the Bell Centre. Failing to make the playoffs is not something that the fans, the players, the sponsors, the media, and most importantly the organization find tolerable or acceptable. The pressure—both internal and external—to win now is permanent. It is for these reasons that general manager Pierre Gauthier absolutely cannot remain in his position after this season concludes, and it is for these reasons that he must be replaced before the planning begins in earnest for next season.

The NHL Entry Draft is the first major event where the Canadiens can begin the overhaul to regain their competitive advantage in the NHL and recruit the lions of tomorrow. The amateur scouting team for the Canadiens, headed by Trevor Timmins, is not a part of the problem. Timmins did not trade Ryan McDonagh and Chris Higgins (both first round draft choices) to the New York Rangers, and while some may question (with the benefit of hindsight) some of his other first round selections, he has consistently been able to find quality players in later rounds that have turned into bona fide NHL regulars. He will have plenty of opportunity this June to improve the future of the Canadiens, as the team holds all of its picks for the first four rounds plus the 2nd round selection of the Nashville Predators.



As the team will no doubt finish in the bottom five of the standings it is in a prime position for a lottery selection, which means that there is a strong possibility the team could add either Nail Yakupov or Mikhail Grigorenko this summer. Both of these prospects are touted as being NHL-ready at age 18, and both would fill a major organizational need for the Habs. Many fans, the author included, are leaning towards Grigorenko, a 6'2" forward that can play either centre or right wing that brings size and strength to his game. Yakupov is another skilled playmaker, and while the Habs would be foolish to pass on him if he is available to them and Grigorenko off the board, his size places him in the same category as a more skilled Tomas Plekanec. The Canadiens fan base has clamoured for a generation now for a big centre that can control a game, and Grigorenko represents that opportunity. Indeed, if all goes according to the plan of some fans, Grigorenko will not be the only major acquisition the Canadiens make this summer at the expense of the Quebec Remparts.



Ever since the Canadiens organization cut off current head coach Randy Cunneyworth at the knees, he has been in a lame duck situation, merely playing out the season as he awaits to be replaced by someone acceptable to the Quebec language police. For Gauthier to make such a statement as he did when he apologized—actually apologized to people—for hiring a unilingual Anglophone coach betrayed his new hiring and set him on an unwinnable course. Regardless of whether or not the season was already deemed lost in December when Jacques Martin was fired on the morning of an important game, to effectively slap a “best before June 2012” sticker on Cunneyworth was a move desperately lacking in class. When ranking low moves made by NHL executives this past season, this move ranks right near the bottom in a competition with Columbus GM Scott Howson throwing his team’s captain Rick Nash under the bus at the trade deadline. It made Cunneyworth’s performance as interim coach irrelevant in terms of his future with the club; in order to appease the media and a small segment of the fan base, Gauthier undercut his new coach and made it clear that there would be a new face behind the bench in 2012-13.

Cunneyworth, for his part, has done himself few favours in his short time as head coach. He has continued to give the utterly ineffective Scott Gomez prime playing minutes while limiting opportunities for his young players. The team has continued to squander leads and play terribly in front of 21,273 fans at the Bell Centre on a regular basis. The near-catastrophe against the Minnesota Wild at the start of March embodied everything wrong about the current coaching philosophy and roster issues facing the Canadiens this season. Though the Habs narrowly escaped blowing a 4-1 lead with a shootout victory, many fans were absolutely aghast at the meltdown in the final minutes of the third period. This is something that the Habs used to do to other teams. Cunneyworth, much like his predecessor, puts his young players in situations where they are doomed to fail, and in turn they are punished with less ice time. Even though Gauthier cast the die against his head coach months ago, Cunneyworth has done little to bolster his resume for future NHL employment.

Ever since Guy Carbonneau was fired in March 2009, the Canadiens have lacked a spirited personality behind the bench. While an outright caricature à la John Tortorella is not necessary, having a fired-up and provoking personality as a head coach can help a team get and stay motivated during important times in a game or a season. The Habs have also been without a coach that has a winning legacy at any level of hockey; Jacques Martin has a decades-long career without a single Stanley Cup Finals appearance, while Cunneyworth’s record as a player and a coach is also devoid of championships. If the Canadiens are serious about instilling a winning mentality in their players, then they must turn to a proven champion to lead them as their next head coach. They must turn to their storied past one more time to help lead them to a brighter future. They must turn to one of the fiercest lions in the club’s history, a man that defines winning, nothing else.

It is time for Patrick Roy to become an NHL head coach. Roy knows the game tremendously well, and was one of the most cerebral players of his era. He carried the Canadiens to Stanley Cup championships in 1986 and 1993 that they had no business winning, earning the Conn Smythe on both occasions. He



continued that championship legacy after the Colorado trade. Following his retirement, Roy took up coaching in the QMJHL where he has led the Quebec Remparts to a Memorial Cup championship (2006) and consistently had the team near the top of the QMJHL standings. His continued commitment to winning has attracted interest from other teams, and Roy himself expressed in 2009 that he was interested in one day becoming an NHL head coach. It would only be fitting that Roy make his debut behind an NHL bench with the same team that made him a legend as a player. Yes, Roy does come with some drawbacks: his fiery temper and alleged ego may overshadow some of his players' on-ice exploits. But he has demonstrated himself to be savvy with the media, an effective motivator, and an engaging coach that gets the best out of his players.



Who defines winning better than this man?

Most interestingly of all for fans who are tired of “the system” of the Martin era, “Since taking the reigns [sic] in Quebec, Roy has preached nothing but offense. The Remparts offense has never ranked below 6th and has been Top 4 five times in the last 6 years. Despite his offensive propensity, Roy is no slouch on the defensive end. He may not focus as much of his attention towards defense as he should but he still has managed to have a Top 6 defense four times in his 6 years.”[1] The Canadiens’ legacy is predicated on fast and skilled players utilizing those talents, and it is time to hire a coach that can bring back Canadiens hockey to Montreal.

With Roy as the next head coach, an experienced general manager becomes all the more important. The next GM must provide Roy with the personnel that can be channelled properly and help the Habs rebound quickly from the disastrous 2011-12 campaign. There are a number of key contracts that must be renewed this summer: Carey Price and P.K. Subban are both restricted free agents that will command significant raises above their current deals. Price will likely expect a deal in range with his fellow elite goaltenders, and while Subban will not get a Doughty-like deal, his second contract will be hefty. To accommodate these deals the new GM must also find a way to purge the team of the toxic contracts that are infecting the team’s payroll. Scott Gomez and Tomas Kaberle must not be part of next year’s Canadiens. Getting the right people to join the Canadiens will be a top priority for the next general manager, thus making it critical that that person is an astute talent evaluator and master of salary cap management. We do not yet know what the financial landscape of the NHL will look like next season and will not until the new collective bargaining agreement is signed, but the next GM must be ready for whatever awaits.



Rather than looking to a great player of the storied past, in this area the Habs should look to a more recent member of the organization that has taken some time to hone his craft elsewhere. Julien Brisebois has been the assistant GM in Tampa Bay for the past two seasons; prior to that he was involved in the Montreal organization for nine years. He knows the club's philosophy and he is familiar with many of the personnel here. Indeed, he is partly responsible for them being here. At a mere 34 years old, Brisebois is a hot commodity and could emerge as one of the best executives of the new generation of NHL leadership. He is a product of the "new NHL" that arose out of the lockout: he was the Canadiens' capologist for several years and he also spent time as the general manager of the Hamilton Bulldogs. He is intelligent and articulate, with a legal background that makes him a strong contract negotiator, and would make for an excellent successor to the disastrous Gauthier regime. The hitch may be in luring Brisebois away from Tampa, where he is being mentored by Steve Yzerman, though Yzerman himself "has publicly commented that he expects to lose Brisebois to another team looking for a general manager." [2] While it is always a risk to give an executive his first NHL general manager position in an intense pressure cooker like Montreal, Brisebois would be up to the task.



Young, educated, and experience in the Habs organization: Julien BriseBois would be an ideal "next generation" GM to lead the Habs forward

There is little reason to believe that the Canadiens cannot orchestrate a rapid turnaround from this annus horribilis and re-establish themselves as a legitimate contender next season. They have an all-world calibre goaltender, a solid defence corps that will be bolstered by a healthy Markov, and some forwards that are capable of potting 25-30 goals a season. The organization will need to lure some key free agents to replace the roster holes created by departing players (a list that will hopefully include Gomez and Kaberle) and it will need to protect its young assets with some veteran presence. There is a recent precedent for a lottery-pick team to rebound and have a fantastic season: in 2006-07 the Philadelphia Flyers finished with an astonishing NHL-low 57 points, only to come back in '07-08 and go all the way to the Eastern Conference Finals. Granted, the Flyers benefited from being able to trade a valuable commodity like Peter Forsberg to fast-track the rebuild. But with a new coach in place that puts a priority on offence, and a new general manager that can recruit talent that has the drive and passion to compete at a high level in Montreal, there is no reason to not believe that the lions of winter can roar once again.

[1] "Patrick Roy as Habs Head Coach?" 26 Oct. 2011. Accessed 4 March 2012. [http://www.centericnews.com/\\_/articles/patrick-roy-as-habs-head-coach-r68](http://www.centericnews.com/_/articles/patrick-roy-as-habs-head-coach-r68)

[2] Jonathan Willis. "Is Tampa Bay Lightning Assistant G.M. Julien BriseBois Ready For The Big Chair?" Edmonton Journal 12 Feb. 2012. <<http://blogs.edmontonjournal.com/2012/02/12/is-tampa-bay-lightning-assistant-g-m-julien-brisebois-ready-for-the-big-chair/>>



## **Product Review 2011-2012 Panini Limited Hockey**

**By Tony Joyce aka Enigma**

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

### **Product detail**

1 pack per box

7 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$95.00 - \$109.99

### **Product Highlight**

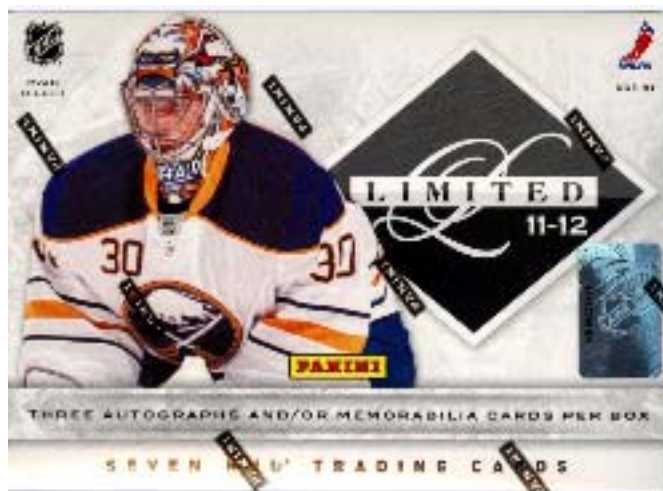
- New! High Numbers - this year will bring 25 of the league's top goalies, limited to just 99 copies!

- New! Phenoms RCs: Each version features a unique, definable patch! Base Phenoms - features hard signed autos with team logo patches. Silver Spotlights - feature each team's secondary logo. Gold Spotlights - feature either a commemorative draft year patch or an NHLPA patch. Platinum Spotlight - features an NHL patch. Rookie Class Letters/Numbers Signatures - feature signed jersey swatches cut straight off the backs of the game's top prospects!

- New in 2011! Net Presence Memorabilia - offers a jumbo swatch of twine cut from nets used during the 2011 NHL All-Star Game!

- 175 Cards in the set!

- Base RCs #d to 299, with three parallels #d to 49, 10 and 1



### **Box break**

3 Autographs/Memorabilia

4 Commons/High numbers/Parallels/Inserts

### **Case break**

6 Phenoms,

plus one Phenoms Silver

3 Jumbos

1 Men of Mayhem Signature

2 Brothers In Arms memorabilia



- 1 Net Presence memorabilia
- 1 High Number common
- 4 Team Trademarks
- 1 Limited Trios
- 4 Banner Seasons

## Highlights

### Brothers In Arms

features memorabilia from the NHL's top goaltending tandems. Look for Patch variations limited to 25 copies or fewer!

### Game Pucks

feature sweet swatches cut from game-used biscuits. Watch for prime versions adorned with player autographs!

Look for several ON-CARD autograph sets, including Select Signatures, Back To The Future Signatures and Men of Mayhem Signatures

Watch for the return of 1/1 NHL Shields, 1/1 Limited Cut Signatures and 1/1 Manufacturer's Marks!

Jumbos and Freshmen Jumbos feature wild, oversized swatches and autographs from top rookies along with the game's hottest stars!

## What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jn8O...4&feature=plcp>

Base /299 (3) - Adam graves, Alexander Ovechkin, Zdeno Chara





Banner Season Ryan Kesler /25



Antti Niemi Jersey /99



Limited Trios Niklas Backstrom 2-color Patch / Cal Clutterbuck 2-color Patch / Mikko Koivu 1-color Patch /25



Team Trademarks Jamie Benn Auto /99





Private Signings Steven Stamkos Auto

**Final ratings**

Base - 4.5/5

Design - 4.75/5

Fun - 4/5

Value - 3.5/5

Rebuy - 3.5/5

Total - 20.25/25 (81%)



**Pros:**

Continuation of the Private Signings program (not counted as one of the three hits)

Background on base cards are nice

Player photos are different for current and retired players (color vs black and white)

**Cons:**

Prime cards and their 1-color Patches

Light chipping on cards from packaging and handling

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](http://www.paniniamerica.net).



**PANINI**



## **Product Review 2011 Panini Plates and Patches Football**

**By Tony Joyce aka Enigma**

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

### **Product detail**

1 pack per box

10 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$144.99 - \$164.99

### **Product highlights**

- New! Rookie Cards -Bolstered by On-Card Autographs and Prime Memorabilia Pieces for the top 36 first-year players, including Cam Newton, Mark Ingram, A.J. Green and more! Numbered to 499 or less.
- New! Limited-Edition Nameplate, Brand Logo, Laundry Tag & NFL Shield versions all sequentially numbered to 25 or less!
- Added for 2011! Signal Callers: This years Signal Callers features legendary quarterbacks including Dan Marino, Brett Favre, Joe Montana, John Elway and more!
- New! Autographed On-Card Prime Memorabilia Rookie Cards Featuring Cam Newton, Mark Ingram, A.J. Green, Jake Locker, Julio Jones, Blaine Gabbert, Christian Ponder, Andy Dalton, Stevan Ridley, Greg Little, Daniel Thomas, Randall Cobb and Ryan Mallett. Seq. #ed to 499 or less.
- Signals Callers - 2011 features autographs of Legendary Quarterbacks; Dan Marino, Len Dawson, Bart Starr, Brett Favre, Joe Montana, John Elway and Roger Staubach
- Look for Printing Plates, Autographed Printing Plates, Prime Memorabilia Printing Plates and Autographed Prime Memorabilia Printing Plates.
- Look for Autographed Prime Memorabilia cards featuring Nameplates, Brand Logos, Laundry Tags, NFL Shield and Plates & Patches of Michael Vick, Drew Brees, Larry Fitzgerald, Tom Brady, Philip Rivers, Peyton Manning, Adrian Peterson, Arian Foster, Ben Roethlisberger, Sam Bradford, Troy Polamalu, Tony Romo and Aaron Rodgers.
- Look for limited edition Nameplate, Brand Logo, Laundry Tag & NFL Shield versions seq. #ed to 25 or less
- Look for limited edition Plates & Patches versions seq. #ed to 1



### **What we pulled**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEi4leoZUbE>



Base /299 (2) - Steve Johnson, Nate Burleson  
 Silver /100 (1) - Zack Pianalto  
 Honors /249 (1) - Sam Bradford  
 Rookie Blitz /249 (1) - Mark Ingram



Roy Helu Jr. RC/Auto /150



Colin Kaepernick RC/3-color Patch/Auto /499



Prime Jerseys Chris Johnson 2-color  
 Patch /50



Silver Signatures Dwayne Harris Auto /100





NFL Equipment Combos Dexter McCluster  
Dual Jersey /50



**Final ratings:**

Base - 4/5  
Design - 4.5/5  
Fun - 4.5/5  
Value - 3.5/5  
Rebuy - 3.5/5  
Overall - 20/25 (80%)

**Pros:**

Nice design work  
5 hits in each box

**Cons:**

Another 1-pack product at a high price  
Hit or miss and the misses hurt  
Premium product with sticker autos

No NPN Information

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](http://www.paniniamerica.net).



# PANINI



## **Product Review 2012 Topps Series 1 Baseball**

**By Tony Joyce aka Enigma**

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

### **Product detail**

36 packs per box

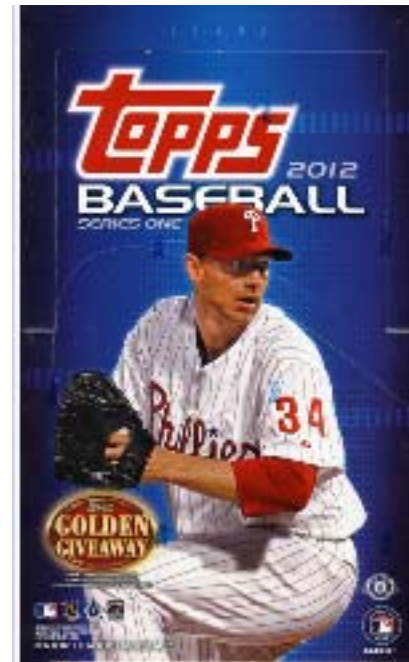
10 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$57.99 - \$69.99

### **Product highlights**

Base cards

The 330-card base set includes 265 Veterans, 30 Rookies, 10 League Leaders, the 2 Cy Young Award Winners, the 2 League MVPs, the 2 Rookies of the Year, 5 Record Breakers for the 2011 season, 4 World Series Highlights cards, and 10 cards recognizing the Active Leaders in 10 categories.



### **Parallel cards**

- Black Parallel (330): Black-bordered cards sequentially numbered to 61. HOBBY & HTA ONLY
- Platinum Parallel (330): Platinum-bordered cards. ONE OF ONE!
- Golden Moments Parallel (330): A special parallel on shimmering gold foil. Inserted 1:4.
- Wood Parallel (330): The base cards printed on wood stock. ONE OF ONE!
- Base Card Printing Plates (1,320): All 330 base cards will have their 4 printing inserted in the product. ONE OF ONE! These will be plates of card fronts only. HOBBY & HTA ONLY
- Gold Silk Collection (100): Framed mini silk cards printed on special gold silk. Sequentially numbered to 50. HOBBY & HTA ONLY

### **TOPPS BASEBALL SERIES 1 GOLDEN GIVEAWAY**

Golden Giveaway Code Card - Find special code cards inserted 1:6 packs! Every code unlocks a golden chance to WIN PRIZES! Unlock exclusive die-cut cards, unlock ONE OF ONE gold-embedded die-cut cards, unlock golden digital coins to collect and win prizes! Codes Unlock Cards And Coins! Collectors can also build their Coin collections, and as collection milestones are reached, unlock even more prizes! Points can also be used to bid on the ultimate Die-Cut Chrome Card!

Golden Moments Die-Cut Chrome Card: Striking die-cut chrome cards featuring 100 players and their greatest Golden Moment.



**One Of One Truly Golden Moments Base Set Parallel:** A parallel of the base set with a piece of real gold embedded in the card! ONE OF ONE!

**Golden Moments Die-Cut Chrome Card Gold Parallel:** A parallel of the die-cut chrome cards numbered to 99.

**Gold Team Coins:** Every MLB team will be represented with a Gold in five different denominations. As Gold Coins are unlocked, the points will go into the collector's Bank, and can be used to bid for exciting prizes!

**Autographed Gold Coin Card:** 10 Gold Coins will be physically reproduced and embedded in a card, along with an autograph of a star from that team! Signed on card and sequentially numbered to 5!

**Golden Moments Die-Cut Chrome Card Truly Golden Parallel:** A parallel of the die-cut chrome cards with a piece of real gold embedded in the card. ONE OF ONE!

**GOLDEN RELIC CARDS - ALL ARE HOBBY & HTA ONLY, 1 PER HTA BOX/1PER HOBBY CASE**

**Golden Greats Coin Cards (15):** Golden Greats on cards with an embedded gold coin featuring their likeness. Numbered to each Great's jersey number.

**Retired Rings (25):** Celebrating players with retired numbers, each card will have a specially designed gold ring embedded in it.

**Gold World Series Champions Pin Cards (20):** Cards featuring a World Series Champion player with a specially created pin embedded.

**Solid Golden Greats (15):** Golden Greats on cards made of a solid piece of gold. ONE OF ONE!

**Golden Moments 24K Gold Leaf Card (20):** Select Golden Moments cards will also have a version where all foil is real 24k gold! Limited to 5.

## INSERT CARDS

**1987 Topps Minis (50):** Mini featuring the biggest stars on the classic 1987 Topps design. Inserted 1:4.



## SKETCH CARDS - HOBBY & HTA ONLY

100 original sketch cards. ONE OF ONE!

### What we pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vmylbpzfz14>

Base - 293/330

Dupes - 0

SP - 0

Golden Giveaway Codes - 6 (not scanned)

Gold Sparkle (9)

1987 Minis (9)

Classic Walk-Offs (4)

Gold Futures (6)

Gold Standard (6)

Golden Greats (9)

Golden Moments (9)

Prime 9 Home Run Legends Redemptions (2)

Timeless Talents (6)



Golden Moments Jonathan Lucroy Jersey

### Final ratings

Base - 4.5/5

Design - 4/5

Fun - 3.5/5

Value - 4/5

Rebuy - 5/5

Overall - 21/25 (84%)





**Pros:**

Nice assortment of inserts  
Almost a complete base set  
Entertaining SPs to chase  
Golden Giveaway Promotion  
Gold Rush Wrapper Redemption Program

**Cons:**

Gold cards are unnumbered  
Tedious to rip through 36 packs  
1 Hit per box

**NPN Information:**

Hand print name and address on a 3x5 index card and send in a #10 envelope (standard PWE) to

NPN Topps BB Series 1  
PO Box 763  
Pittston, PA 18640

Limit 1 request per household

Postmarked by 11/14/12  
Received by 11/21/12

Canada Skills Question:  $4 \times 4 + 4 - 11 = ?$

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](http://www.topps.com).





## **It's an Exciting Time in the World of Hockey**

**By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan**

The NHL Trade deadline is just recently behind us, with teams completing 15 different trades, involving 30 players and 18 draft picks. No doubt the biggest one of the day was also the one that ended it: the Vancouver Canucks traded Rookie centre Cody Hodgson and minor league defenseman Alexander Sulzer, to the Buffalo Sabres for Rookie winger Zach Kassian and defenseman Marc-Andre Gragnani.

Trading a slick play making centre for a winger known as more of a crasher & banger (though not without some offensive upside of his own) was a deal to make the Canucks a tougher team now, and improve their chances of a Stanley Cup victory.

The trade also had huge implications in the hobby world. Kassian had already become a popular player amongst Sabres collectors, and Hodgson was one of the handful of truly elite rookies this year, in terms of hobby potential. Playing on a popular team, with a lot of hype surrounding his long awaited call up last season – Hodgson's card had been hot all season.

How will the trade effect their values? Only time will tell – but if these two rising stars play up to potential, they should be just fine.

With the trade deadline behind us, that can only mean that the end to the NHL's regular season is drawing near. Most teams have only a handful of games left, and there has certainly been some surprises.

That the St. Louis Blues are first place, both in the Western Conference, and the entire league, can only be described as shocking. This is a team that many prognosticators expected to see miss the playoffs all together, not enter the playoffs as one of the favorites. Led by an incredible goaltending duo of Brian Elliott and Jaroslav Halak, the Blues are poised to make a great run.

Equally shocking, albeit for different reasons, are the seasons strung together by the San Jose Sharks and the Washington Capitals. The Sharks, boasting such players as Joe Thornton, Patrick Marleau, Brent Burns, and Martin Havlat; the Sharks have perennial contenders in the West since Thornton's arrival nearly a decade ago. With only six games remaining they're on the outside of the playoff picture looking in – which can only be described as a bitter disappointed.

The Washington Capitals, with superstar Alexander Ovechkin, were predicted by most to cruise to a fifth straight division title, challenge for the Eastern Conference title (one they'd won in each of the last two years) and make a serious run at the Stanley Cup – instead they've only recently clawed their way back into a playoff spot, and are even then just hanging onto eighth.



and face of the league, had missed nearly the entire season with the effects of a concussion suffered on January 1<sup>st</sup> of last year. With thirteen points in just seven games since his return, Crosby looks to be suffering no ill effects of the injury that kept him out of action for so long. With his addition to the lineup, alongside NHL Scoring leader Evgeni Malkin, has many people believing that the Penguins are the favorites to win another Stanley Cup.

In the hobby world, we've just recently seen the conclusion of yet another instalment of 'National Hockey Card Day' from Upper Deck. Once a year, Upper Deck has been producing a small set of trading cards that have been given away by hobby shops across Canada, and this year they added the USA as well!

To help raise awareness of the promotion online, Upper Deck generously donated a box of 2011-12 Black Diamond, and an autographed Rookie Puck for SCF to giveaway to members participating in the promotion! Congratulations go out to Mike Bray, KangoBass, wolf1bh, patrickadams26, roaddogg02316, gardzy99, Mike1433, satellitejack – all winners in the contest!

Another congratulations needs to go out to xelloss1012. He was the winner of the 'Ultimate Rivalry Contest' that has been run in five legs this season by RGM81. The prizes can only be described as phenomenal. Donated by our friends at Legend's Depot, the prize package included tickets to the Leafs vs Habs game in Montreal on April 7<sup>th</sup>, passes to meet Canadiens players, and some Autographed memorabilia. This incredible prize should provide a great night of memories, and we're really hoping to see a few pictures posted afterwards! Congrats again to xelloss1012, and thanks so much to Legends Depot for making such an awesome prize available.

The next few weeks will also see many exciting new products hit the shelves from all three manufacturers:

***In The Game :***

**Captain-C :** March 30<sup>th</sup>

**Between The Pipes :** May 3<sup>rd</sup>

***Upper Deck :***

**SP Game Used :** April 3<sup>rd</sup>

**SP Authentic :** April 3<sup>rd</sup>

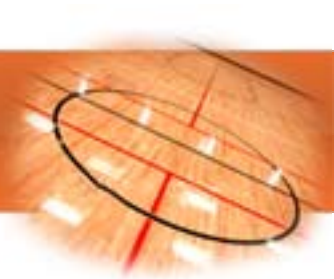
**SPx :** April 21<sup>st</sup>

***Panini :***

**Elite :** April 4<sup>th</sup>

**Titanium :** May 2<sup>nd</sup>

Between the upcoming Stanley Cup Playoffs, and many new releases, the next month should be an exciting time for Hockey Fans and Hobbyists alike!



## Courtside

By Jay Weger aka Jay520

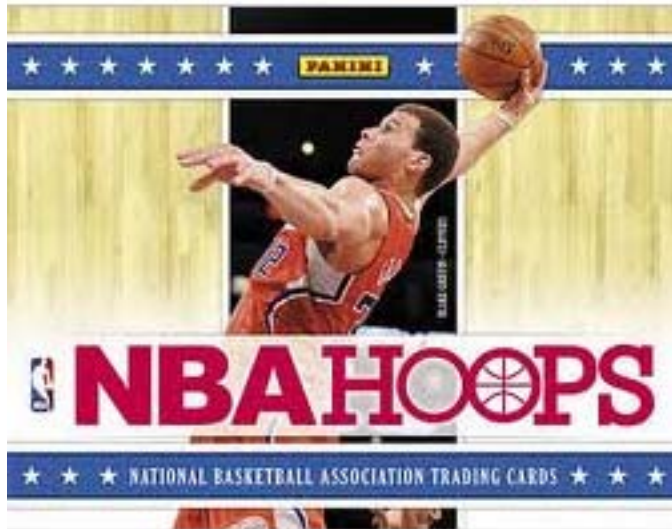
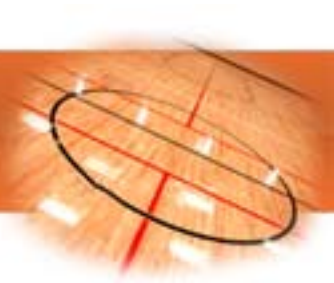
## Contests & Winners

This March sees vixsportscards in 1<sup>st</sup> place with 28 points for the NBA Top Performers contest. 2<sup>nd</sup> place is anttheman with 25 points followed by rocketfan86 in 3<sup>rd</sup> with 24 points and 4<sup>th</sup> mrjobe85, Thrillseeker, tk10775 and toddsr all tied with 22 points. The results for Feb. saw a 3 way tie for 1<sup>st</sup> by AiThor, toddsr and vixsportscards who split 100 cc while rocketfan86 took 2<sup>nd</sup> place alone to get 50 cc. In the season long NBA GTS contests andrewhoya and pwaldo have got 7 wins tied in 1<sup>st</sup> place while gardzy99 and TurdfFerguson are tied in 2<sup>nd</sup> with 5 wins. Making up 3<sup>rd</sup> is BC26, gladdyontherise, JesRey and samoan3d with 4 wins and tied in 4<sup>th</sup> is FarGone, , hiaphatboy, k northrup and Liverpools#9 with 3 wins for the regular members thorough 3/26. For the VIP's gladdyontherise is in 1<sup>st</sup> with 16 wins followed by andrewhoya with 12 wins. 3<sup>rd</sup> is bouncer and tied in 4<sup>th</sup> mikepro44 and NY Sports Teams with 10 and 9 wins respectively. The winner of the 2012 NBA All-Star Weekend contest was metsmagic18 who won a 09-10 Abs. Memorabilia Chris Paul Star Gazing gu/100. 2<sup>nd</sup> place was adam334581 earning 500 cc and 3<sup>rd</sup> was wogman56 getting 250 cc. There was a lot of interest shown in the 2012 "March Madness" bracket challenges as there were over 35 members entered and 10 for the VIP. With the Final Four yet to take place the top 3 spots are abah58 in 1<sup>st</sup> alone and tied in 2<sup>nd</sup> is jdlee123 and Dhays12 while LonMaya and leopards40 are tied for 3<sup>rd</sup>. VIP is Enigma in 1<sup>st</sup> with Money Time 2.0 in 2<sup>nd</sup> and NY Sports Teams in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## Hobby News



This month in hobby news we saw the first 2 11-12 releases by Panini. 1<sup>st</sup> was NBA Hoops to hit the collectors in late February to mixed reviews. Most were happy to have something new to break while others couldn't justify paying \$70+ for mostly base and some inserts and 2 autos (common or no-name players) with no rookie cards. 2<sup>nd</sup> was Preferred that received a better reception. Collectors liked the designs and mix of autos offered in the product even some of the booklets. The Panini Choice die-cut and Crown Royale are favorites as well as the Silhouette that have a big swatch of jersey with the auto. Fleeer Retro from UD has been announced for a release date of April 15<sup>th</sup> while the next Panini product



is slated for May 9<sup>th</sup> which is Past and Present. The Lin-sanity craze has passed as his cards have finally come down to earth this month on eBay. But one player that has seen a steady rise in hobby love is Kevin Love. His RC cards have started to heat up as he is playing great in Minnesota.

## NBA NEWS

By Kevin Rhyne aka Tarheelsnipe

Before we get started on this month's basketball news, here's a quick note on the NBA All-

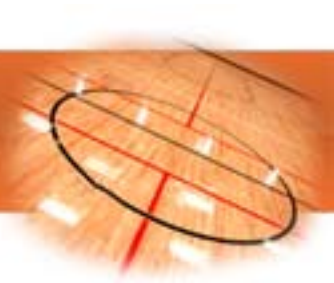
Star game, which happened just after last month's magazine went to press. The event was held in Orlando, Florida on February 26<sup>th</sup>. The Rising Stars Challenge featured some of the NBA's best rookies and sophomores in a draft-style game with Charles Barkley and Shaquille O'Neal picking their teams from a pool of players selected by various NBA assistant coaches. "Team Chuck" beat "Team Shaq" with a final score of 146-133. Kyle Irving's 34 points on 8/8 shooting from behind the arc and 9 assists aided in the win.

The 3-point Shootout went to a tie-breaker round, with Kevin Love outgunning Kevin Durant for this year's title. The Slam Dunk Contest didn't feature any big names and was relatively unexciting without names like Griffin and LeBron in the contest. Jeremy Evans won the contest by jumping over Gordon Hayward and throwing down two basketballs. Fun fact – two regulation basketballs will fit through a basketball rim at the same time.

The West held its dominance over the East by defeating them 152-149. The high score proved once again that defense takes a backseat to flashy dunks and high fives. This fan would like to see a competitive All-Star game – Howard and Bynum using monster drop steps under the basket, LeBron and Durant posting up each other 10 feet from the basket, and Kobe and Wade with turnaround fade-aways driving on each other to the rim. Like many other basketball fans, I've become numb to the All-Star hype. Kevin Durant and LeBron James each scored 36 points. Durant won his first All-Star MVP award.

Let's update the teams to beat list:

**Chicago** – They're the first team to an NBA best 40 wins. Rose is at the top of the MVP candidate list because he's doing it all in terms of scoring, assists, and defense. He's developed into a true floor general.



**OKC** – They continue to be the team to beat in the West. Durant and Westbrook have combined to be the NBA's biggest one-two scoring punch in the league. They're both in the NBA's top-five in scoring – and they're fun to watch. The fans in OKC are watching something special.

**LA** (both teams) – They're neck and neck for third place in the West.

**San Antonio** – Tony Parker looks like he's traveled back in time four years, and he's reminded the fans that the Spurs are contenders.

**Miami** – They're sticking with what works: LeBron + Wade + Bosh = Wins. 35 of them so far for the second best record in the league.

**Orlando** – With Dwight Howard staying in Orlando, the Magic have a solid foundation with the league's top Center.

The NBA trade deadline has come and gone on March 15<sup>th</sup> with a handful of trades being made. Here are the trades below:

**Golden State and Milwaukee**

**Warriors** get: C Andrew Bogut, G/F Stephen Jackson

**Bucks** get: G Monta Ellis, C Kwame Brown, C Ekpe Udoh

**New Jersey and Portland**

**Nets** get: Gerald Wallace

**Blazers** get: F/C Memhet Okur, F Shawne Williams, Protected 1st-round pick

**Cleveland and L. A. Lakers**

**Cavaliers** get: F Luke Walton, F Jason Kapono, 2012 1st-round pick (lottery-protected)

**Lakers** get: G Ramon Sessions, F Christian Eyenga, Rights to swap Heat's 2013 1st-round draft pick

**Houston and Portland**

**Rockets** get: C Marcus Camby

**Blazers** get: C Hasheem Thabeet, G Jonny Flynn, 2012 2nd-round draft pick

**Golden State and San Antonio**

**Warriors** get: F Richard Jefferson, G T.J. Ford, Protected 2012 1st-round pick

**Spurs** get: F/G Stephen Jackson

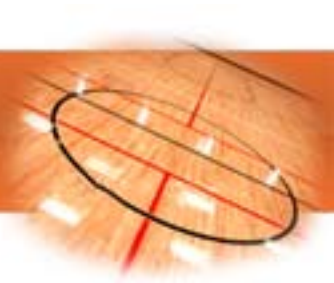
**Houston and L. A. Lakers**

**Rockets** get: G Derek Fisher, 2012 1st-round pick (acquired from Dallas in Odom trade)

**Lakers** get: F/C Jordan Hill

**Denver and L. A. Clippers and Washington**

**Nuggets** get: C JaVale McGee, F/C Ronny Turiaf



**Clippers** get: G Nick Young

**Wizards** get: F/C Nene, F Brian Cook, Future 2nd-round pick

In other trade news Barbosa was sent to Indiana for a draft pick and Sam Young went to Philly for a Memphis pick. Arenas signed with Memphis and Wilson Chandler signed a 5year contract with Denver. Derek Fisher had his contract bought out by Houston and signed with OKC while the Spurs signed recently waived Boris Diaw.

My MVP candidate list:

Kevin Durant

Lebron James

Blake Griffin

Kobe Bryant

Dwight Howard

Derrick Rose

Kevin Love

### March Madness

The road to the Final Four featured some big upsets early, with two #2 seeds losing in the first round. Lehigh punched Duke in the mouth, and Norfolk State sent Missouri to the bus early. Cinderella's clock struck midnight at the Elite Eight, as the remaining double-digit seeds Ohio, NC State, and Xavier were beaten by college basketball's powerhouses. Kentucky was the most impressive team on the way to New Orleans. They beat their opponents by lopsided margins.

Congrats to these four programs:

(1) Kentucky

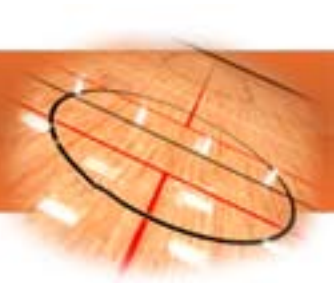
(4) Louisville

(2) Ohio State

(2) Kansas



The Naismith Hall of Fame finalists were announced, and to no one's surprise, Reggie Miller was at the top of the list. Others joining him on the ballot are Rick Pitino, Bill Fitch, Katrina McClain, Don Nelson, Maurice Cheeks, Bernard King, Dick Motta, Hank Nichols, Ralph Sampson, Jamaal Wilkes,



and the All-American Red Heads (an all-female exhibition teams similar to the Harlem Globetrotters – who knew?!).

### By the numbers:

**52 – Combined scoring average of Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook.**

**51 – Number of NCAA tournament appearances by Kentucky – most all-time.**

**19 – Number of celebratory phone calls, texts, and emails I received when Duke lost in the first round.**

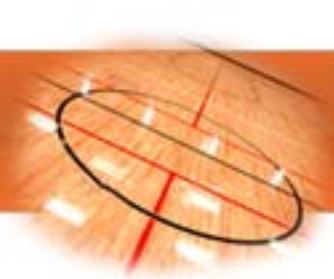
**14 – Number of consecutive All-Star games played by Kobe Bryant.**

**0 – Number of times a #16 seed has beaten a #1 seed in the NCAA tournament.**

## Pack & Box Breaks

Finally with 2 new products out from Panini there were a lot of breaks. Starting off with 11-12 Preferred with RAFAEL311 getting a Dave Cowens Panini's Choice auto/25 and a Decades booklet of Kobe/Pippen/Penny/T-Mac/Pierce/VC/Iverson/Nash/199. 41 fan got a Cedric Maxwell Preferred emerald auto/5, Gary Payton Silhouette gu auto/10 and All-Star booklet of Amare/Oakley/Monroe/Starks/Johnson/Jackson/Ewing/199. MaskofBarkley hit a David Robinson Silhouette gu auto/10. Edgar4HOF got a Gail Goodrich Panini's Choice red auto/25 and Decades booklet of Mourning/Mullin/Rodman/Majerle/Ewing/Starks/Jackson/Price/199 from 3 boxes. DonrussKings got a Forward booklet of Malone/Pippen/Drexler/Chambers/Wilkins/Vandeweghe/Coleman/125 and a sick Kobe Bryant Panini's Choice emerald auto 3/3. Rich N. also hit a Kobe Bryant Panini's Choice emerald auto but 2/3 from his break making 2 of the 3 pulled on this forum. aandbconst opened 3 boxes to get a Bill Laimbeer Crown Royale auto/25, Robert Parish Panini's Choice auto/25, Grant Hill Silhouette gu auto/25 and Assists booklet of Rose/Rondo/Paul/Ellis/Westbrook/Curry/Billups/199 and Rookies booklet of Johnson/Hayward/Udoh/Stephenson/Pondexter/Wall/99. theguru also got 3 boxes earning him a Connie Hawkins Preferred red auto/25, Chris Ford Preferred blue auto/10, Bill Walton Panini's Choice red auto/25, James Harden Panini's Choice blue auto/20 and a sick Derrick Rose Panini's Choice gold auto 4/5 with a Rebound booklet of Amare/Durant/Howard/Nowitzki/Garnett/James/Love/199. jpleazme bought a case and got Silhouette gu autos of Toni Kukoc/25, Clyde Drexler/25, Preferred autos of Stephen Curry/49, Dikembe Mutumbo/74, Connie Hawkins/74, Panini's Choice autos of Xavier McDaniel/25, Sam Perkins/25, James Harden/25, Bill Russell/5 and Rebound booklet of Boozer/Bosh/Lee/Deng/Okur/Jefferson/Randolph/199 and patches/10, Legend booklet – Malone/Ewing/Stockton/Pippen/Rodman/Thomas/150, Legend booklet – O'Neal/Robinson/Kareem/Ewing/Olajuwon/Mutumbo/150, Decades booklet - Kobe/Pippen/Penny/T-Mac/Pierce/VC/Iverson/Nash/199 and Assists booklet - Rose/Rondo/Paul/Ellis/Westbrook/Curry/Billups/199.

11-12 Hoops was the other new product that saw Agent7o2 open 10 packs to get a Shane Battier auto.



cavaliersfan30 opened 8 packs to get a Xavier McDaniel Buy Back auto. lambeauleap87 got a Josh Howard auto out of just 4 packs. ry@n got 2 boxes and pulled autos of Mike Bibby and Sam Young, Artists Proof Rajon Rondo, Baron Davis and 2 Jeremy Lin base. XxViSiOnxX got a box and pulled autos of Jodie Meeks and Trevor Ariza with a glossy LeBron James. AutoCentral got 2 boxes pulling autos of Luis Scola, Jeremy Evans and Wayne Ellington, Artists Proof of Jeremy Lin as well as 2 Lin base. bobo9390 got autos of Hasheem Thabeet and Jose Calderon from a box. Noahmyboy03 got autos of Dexter Pittman and Da'Sean Butler and an Artist Proof black 1/1 of Anthony Morrow. theguru went through 6 boxes getting auto hits of Jordan Hill, Kevin Martin, Channing Frye, O.J. Mayo and Samuel Dalembert, Artists Proof of Dirk, Deron Williams and T-Mac, glossy of Tyreke Evans, Deron Williams and James Harden with several Lin base.



Other big breaks from the other products saw jpleazme hit a Kobe gu/99, Kobe/Igoudala Passing the Torch gu/99, Kobe USA flag patch auto/99, Worthy/Wilkins/Floyd Draft Class triple gu/99, Chris Mullin Elite Series patch/49, DeMarcus Cousins Crusade auto/24, Clyde Drexler USA Basketball patch auto/25 and a Black&Blue Oscar Robertson auto/25 from a case of 10-11 Elite Black Box. leftyguy02in0 hit a Kevin Garnett Gold Medalists gu/299, Mark Price Gold Medalists gu auto/49 and a Dan Majerle Gold Medalists parch auto/25 from 2 boxes of 10-11 Gold Standard. spg hit gold in 2 boxes of Gold Standard with a Kobe/Gasol Gold Rings dual auto/50 but that wasn't the best hit as he pulled a redemption for a Dirk Nowitzki Solid Gold 1/1 made of gold. Jprk31 pulled a Derrick Rose FOTG gu/249 and Deron Williams gold auto/25 redemption from 2 boxes of 10-11 totally Certified. bigp621 hit a amazing LeBron James Gold F/X 1/3 auto from 2 boxes of 11-12 SP Authentic. moe693 hit a rare 1/1 Shareef Abdur-Rahim Super-fractor from 05-06 Finest, Andrew Bynum Hot Numbers gu auto/17 from 08-09 Hot Prospects and LeBron Stat Tracker gu auto 23/25 with a Durant rc patch auto/399 from 07-08 Hot Prospects. In one old school break saw exclamationpark hit a Kobe Bryant E-xceptional Blue parallel/250 with a bv of \$250 and a stunning Charles Barkley Gold Embossed die-cut refractor/74 from a box of 97-98 Finest.



## 13 Odd Moments in Racing History

**By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy**

Sometimes the sport of auto racing is goofy. Stuff happens. As evidenced by the recent events of the Daytona 500 in which Juan Pablo Montoya's car broke under the caution and he slammed into a Jet Dryer at 180 mph causing a massive explosion and subsequent track clean-up with Tide laundry detergent... It got me thinking about the oddest things I have seen in racing during my tenure as a fan so without further ado here are the 13 oddest things I have witnessed or seen. Hope you guys get a kick out of these. Pictures/YouTube links included!

**Johnny Sauter gets a tire stuck on his hood:** In the Nascar Camping World Truck Series race at Martinsville a few years ago Johnny Sauter was contending for the victory. Making a routine pit stop under the caution flag an escaped tire became loose on pit road, got hit, and subsequently took the perfectly odd bounce to land flat on Johnny Sauter's hood, a very low probability and the only time in which I have seen it happen.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UH497ngge00>

**Mark Martin Forgets What Lap it is-Bristol 1994:** Mark Martin is no doubt one of the best our sport has ever seen. However on a day in Bristol in 1994 he had a brain fade of massive proportions. Leading the race under yellow all Mark had to do was drive around behind the pacecar to win the race. However, a lap before the checkered flag he pulled the window net down, pulled off the track, and began celebrating. The race was not over. Martin did not maintain his speed and gave up the win due to a simple brain error. David Green would take the gift and win the race. Completely baffling.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PiOcj8z38c>

**Sterling Marlin Red Flag Fender Pull-Daytona 500-2002:** Sterling Marlin was in prime position to win his 3<sup>rd</sup> Daytona 500 in 2002. Driving the 40 car for Chip Ganassi Marlin was the leader under a late race red flag after contact with Jeff Gordon sent Gordon spinning. Marlin's fender was indeed damaged but still raceable. Under the red flag Marlin got a bright idea to get out and fix the car himself. The only problem with that is that it is completely against the rules. Marlin got out-tugged on his fender, and was subsequently penalized. Ward Burton won the race.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0ObuwlFCoE>

**JPM Jet Dryer Crash-Daytona 500-2012:** The most recent and perhaps the most bizarre. Juan Pablo Montoya broke under the yellow and smashed right into a Jet Dryer full of jet fuel in the 2012 Daytona 500, igniting a massive fireball and burning the jet dryer to a crisp. It





would lead to a red flag, a Tide clean-up, and perhaps the oddest reasoning for a race stoppage in Nascar history.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RijhM\\_POPc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RijhM_POPc)

**Aussie V8 Supercars tire escape-Marcos Ambrose-early 2000s:** Driving his Ford Australian V8 supercar in the early 2000s now current Nascar driver Marcos Ambrose came out of the pits only to lose a tire that was not tightened properly. Although odd it is not a super rare occurrence. What happened after however was. The runaway tire rolled down the track, hit a tire barrier, and bounced up perfectly on the stack, producing some incredibly odd once in a lifetime video and commentary.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNE0G2lDtI0>

**Pacecar accident-WTCC-2009:** I want you to go out and hit the pacecar! Those famous words from Days of Thunder should not apply to auto racing. Although Nick Heidfeld had a similar issue in Formula One in 2002 this is the most recent and spectacular of Pacecar mishaps, this time from the World Touring Car Championship in 2009. Oops.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfQ2jjn0w-s> (1:06 or so in)

**Steve Wallace Hits Fence Post-Daytona Testing-2008:** The son of racing legend Rusty Wallace, Steve Wallace has hit a lot of things and tore up a lot of cars in his Nascar career to this point, but none odder than hitting a fencepost in the garage area at Daytona during testing in 2008. After having completely destroyed his car Wallace said the brake pedal went to the floor- for his sake I hope it did. Embarrassing.



**Mark Martin/Jimmie Johnson Talladega Pace laps-Talladega-2002:** Talladega Superspeedway is famous for its oddities (it is rumored to be built on an ancient Indian burial ground) and in 2002

it had another one. On the pace laps prior to the green flag Chase contenders Mark Martin and Jimmie Johnson made contact after Mark's quick connect steering wheel came off causing him to smash into the 48 car on his inside, setting them both back greatly before the green had even dropped. It has happened one time since this with Denny Hamlin during Daytona qualifying, but this one had much more implication.

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**Mike Simko goes Mad!-Late Models-2006:**-Racecar drivers get mad at each other a lot. Usually little fights or hand signals are used in anger but after getting wrecked out of a late model event in 2006 Mike Simko went Mortal Combat on his opponent. Under yellow Simko jumped towards the car and kicked in its windshield then threw his helmet at him in disgust. Well done angry man!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKTjIHQsv2Y>

**Pacecar Gets Stolen at Talladega-1986:** Pre-race at Talladega is always a good time. In 1986 one fan decided to have a little too much fun and steal the Corvette pacecar. Somehow getting through security the man jumped in the car, fired it up, and took a joyride around the 2.66 mile track before being road blocked and subsequently arrested. Crazy fool!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICi3kIzSIZg>

**Doofus Runs on Track-Silverstone-Formula 1-Early 2000's:** You cannot fix stupid. This was not the first time a fool has gotten onto a racetrack (Pocono in 1992 a man ran across the back straight) but for sheer length and bravery (or stupidity) this guy wins. He caused the safety car obviously. Lunatic!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UihzOCbt0e8>

**Giant Orange escape at Chicagoland-Qualifying-2004:** Sponsored by Tropicana, giant inflatable oranges were around the Chicagoland Speedway in 2004 to promote the event. However during qualifying an impending rain and wind storm rolled in, causing the giant inflatable orange to come on to the track and interfere with qualifying. Quite a sight!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zs8sLICBBkc>

**Drunk Guy asks for Matt Kenseth's Auto-graph-Watkins Glen-2008:** Although I cannot find a picture or video of this event, the memory is fresh. Under a red flag for a crash cleanup at the Watkins Glen road course in New York, a drunk fan jumped the fence from where he was camping, ran down onto the track where the stopped cars were, and put something into the window of Matt Kenseth's car for him to autograph. Perhaps not the best time to do so. The man was arrested and taken to jail. Once out Kenseth got in contact with the man and indeed sent him some autographed stuff.





## **Some (Not so) Bold Predictions for 2012**

**By Brad Wingate aka BBonds25**

Greetings baseball fans! It is that most wonderful time of the year when the tarp is taken off of the infield and the grand old game makes its triumphant return. Trades have been made, free agents have landed (with large bags of cash in some cases), and fantasy teams have been drafted. Bryce Harper has been sent back to the minors, Stephen Strasburg's motion has been scrutinized, and Ryan Braun has been acquitted of all wrong doing. There's nothing left to do now except make my pre-season predictions, and let the games begin.

Let's start in the National League. Now, I don't want to toot my own horn, but last season I did successfully predict the 2011 league MVP and runner-up. Hopefully I can do the same for 2012.

**NL MVP** - I think it is going to be hard for Ryan Braun to repeat as MVP this year. With Prince Fielder sporting the Old English D on his chest (which makes me very happy, by the way), and with his off-season drama, Braun is going to struggle for the first time in his career. I'm sure he'll still hit .300 with 30 HR and 90 RBI, but he will not be as dominant. With that said, I think the man who came in second place last season will take the title this season. Matt Kemp is simply the best position player in the National League. Even if Albert Pujols had not taken his talents to the AL, Kemp would still be the best. He was 9 hits short of winning the first Triple Crown since Carl Yastrzemski did it in 1967, and the first in the National League since Joe Medwick's in 1937. He also came up 1 stolen base short of his preseason goal of for homeruns and 40 steals. This season he has made it a goal to be the major's first 50/50 player. I believe he can get the steals, but with little line-up protection, along with the recent influx in superior pitching, 50 homers may be a reach. I do however think The Bison will edge out Hanley Ramirez for the MVP award.

**NL Cy Young** – This could be the toughest award to predict. 2011 Cy Young winner Clayton Kershaw has steadily improved in each of his 4 seasons, and I see no reason why this year would be any different. His wins and strikeouts have increased each season, while his ERA and WHIP have dropped. He is approaching stats unseen since the dead ball era of the 1960s. I also think Tim Lincecum will make a strong comeback this season, and is the only NL pitcher I see who could overthrow Kershaw. With all due respect to Roy Halladay and Cliff Lee, I think the NL West is going to be the home of the top pitchers for the next several years.

**NL ROY** – Predicting the Rookie of the Year is such roll of the dice, as there are so many uncontrollable factors involved. Based on hype, Bryce Harper is probably everyone's favorite. I don't doubt his skills, but I think he will struggle in his first year of big league action, assuming the Nat's bring him up before September. Colorado's third baseman of the future is Nolan Arenado, and the only thing between him and the Rockies is Casey Blake (yes, he still plays). But Arenado has not played above HiA, though he was named MVP of the Arizona Fall League. So even though he has dominated in the minors, he's yet to play at a higher level. With that said, my pick for NL ROY is Reds' shortstop Zack Cozart. He played great in his debut last season, but that was cut short by an injury. Fully healthy and



ready to take over the starting job, Cozart is ready to help the Reds take the NL Central title. He will be surrounded in the lineup with the likes of Joey Votto, Jay Bruce, Brandon Phillips, and Drew Stubbs, so that will definitely help. The only player who I think could overtake Cozart for the award is his teammate, catcher Devan Mesoraco. In fact, about the only thing that will stand in the way of a Cincinnati rookie taking home the award is manager Dusty Baker, who does not like to play his rookies.

**AL MVP** – As a Tigers fan, I'd like to pick Miguel Cabrera for the award. But with the line-up being almost identical to last season (aside from the addition of Prince Fielder), I don't feel that he will win the award. The offense did so well last year, that unless he hits 60+ homeruns, it just not in the cards. But speaking of cards, my pick for MVP is a former Cardinal. Yes, I am picking Albert Pujols for one simple reason; he will make almost everyone better. Howie Kendrick and Erick Aybar are each ready to have a breakout season hitting in front of Pujols. He will also help to take some of the pressure off of guys like Torii Hunter, Mark Trumbo, and the (finally) returning Kendrys Morales. I cannot think of another player who will have more of an impact on his team that Pujols.



**AL Cy Young** – This is not going to be the year for the Tigers to take home individual awards (but I'll gladly take a World Series title). Justin Verlander turned in one of greatest seasons of any pitcher. But he had an unusually low BABIP rating, and with the Tigers new, and defensively inept, infield, many of those outs will turn into hits. He will still be one of the best pitchers in the league, but for my money, I am going with Angels ace Jered Weaver. He has averaged 16+ wins and 195 strikeouts in his 5 years, and has lowered his ERA in each of the past 3 seasons. Yes, he does have Dan Haren and newly acquired CJ Wilson to challenge him for votes, but Haren is historically shaky after the break, and Wilson may actually have a decline in stats after leaving the launching pad at Arlington. With that said, and the added offense provided by one Albert Pujols, Weaver will only have to battle Verlander for the award.

**AL ROY** – This is another tough category to pick. New Mariners catcher Jesus Montero will add a spark to the Seattle offense. But his defensive inefficiencies may hurt his standing. Yu Darvish is the hottest thing to come across the pond since Daisuke Matsuzaka, but there is no way to know how he will adjust to the Major Leagues, or how well he will pitch in Arlington. The rookie I am most excited to see this season is Rays pitcher Matt Moore. He has been a strikeout machine at every stop in the minors (700 K's in 497.1 IP), and completely dominated in his cup of coffee last season. Already talked about as being better than David Price, Moore is just the next, and perhaps the best, in a long line of great Rays pitchers.

So there you have it. Those are my picks for the 2012 MLB awards. Some of them you may agree with. Others you won't. Either way, let's just hope for a fun and exciting baseball season.



## **The Off-Season of the Quarterback**

**by J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert**

Since the beginning of February, through free agency, the NFL combine, and leading all the way up to the NFL Draft, one position has been on the forefront of every GM's mind, Director of Player Personnel, causal fan, and football card collector: QUARTERBACK. Unless you were the New England Patriots or New Orleans Saints (and even they made moves!), your team was talking to, shopping for, cutting, signing, or trading quarterbacks.

The numbers make your head spin. Since early February, 50+ quarterbacks, from Peyton Manning to Richard Bartel, Drew Brees to Brian Hoyer, were either franchised, traded, cut, signed, or had retired. Add to that the impending arrival via the NFL Draft of Robert Griffin III, Andrew Luck, Ryan Tannehill, former Yankees pitching prospect Brandon Weeden, Russell Wilson, Kirk Cousins, Nick Foles, Brock Osweiler, and NCAA all-time greats Kellen Moore and Case Keenum, and you are looking at over 60 quarterbacks changing teams, re-signing, looking for work, or calling it a career.

Which third string quarterback, with 5 TDs to his 9 INTs, demanded a trade mere days after signing with his team? Whose quarterback is "livid" about making \$17-19 million dollars this season? What career backup, with just two starts, albeit great ones, gets a multi-year deal to start for another team? And since when do press conferences held to announce the signing of a backup quarterback make the national news? Read on!

Almost all of this whole, crazy carousel can be traced back to one man, and one now-very famous neck, that of Peyton Manning. He, the "laser rocket arm," 10 wins and 4,000 yards a season, mega-star changed the course of nearly two dozen teams. By now, the story is familiar to us all. Peyton goes down, and so does the Colts' season. Most of the time, having the worst record in the league would have meant adding someone to the stable that Peyton could throw to, or someone to block for him, or someone on the defensive side to get him the ball back. Getting a Tim Duncan to pair with David Robinson, or even more recently, Bryce Harper to pair with Stephen Strasburg. Ah, but this was not just any draft class. No, this was the year of Andrew Luck. The "can't miss" super-quarterback, said to be the best quarterback prospect since, well, Peyton Manning, or another rather successful signal caller, John Elway (more on him later, too!).



How do the Colts solve this dilemma? They mortgage the franchise, putting it in the (much more cost effective) hands of a college kid yet to take a snap in the NFL, yet to be challenged by the likes of Ray Lewis, Dwight Freeney, Charles Woodson, or Ndamukong Suh, and yet to lead even one game-winning



drive in the pros. The firestorm that followed was downright historic. Peyton's departure led to a house cleaning the Florida Marlins would be jealous of. Out went almost every recognizable name on the roster: Jeff Saturday, Joseph Addai, Pierre Garcon, Ryan Diem, Anthony Gonzalez, Jacob Tamme, Dallas Clark, Gary Brackett, Melvin Bullitt, and fellow quarterbacks Curtis Painter, Dan Orlovsky, and Kerry Collins, all of whom took snaps under center this past season for Indy. For those of you scoring at home, that leaves Trevor Vittatoe as the lone quarterback on the depth chart, at least until they draft Andrew Luck.



With Peyton on the market, everyone's job became unsafe. Right away, a half dozen teams made overtures. Matthew Hasselbeck and Jake Locker felt the breeze of the door swing open for Peyton's visit in Tennessee. Alex Smith was out looking for work fresh off leading the Niners to 13 wins and their best season in decades. Mark Sanchez, even though he had just re-signed for a hefty raise, was back page news in New York. Out from the shadows, John Elway emerged, and the Broncos, whose fans were still euphoric over "Tebow Time!", now had their new savior, the future Hall-of-Famer Peyton Manning.

With Peyton in his place, all of the dominoes began to fall. Denver was only big enough for one superstar quarterback, so Tebow was traded to the Big Apple to back up (or will he?) The Sanchez in New York. Jason Campbell and Josh McCown were brought in to back up Jay Cutler in Chicago, so Caleb Hanie signed to back up Peyton. Frustrated with Tebow in Denver, Brady Quinn left to challenge for time in Kansas City. Jon Kitna was out in Dallas, so Kyle Orton stepped in to back Tony Romo. The Charlie Whitehurst experiment ended before it began in Seattle, and he was off to San Diego, right back where he started his career. Matt Flynn, parlaying two fantastic starts in two years into a \$24 million dollar contract, is the new man in Seattle, also signalling the apparent end of Tavaris Jackson. Chad Henne and David Garrard swapped addresses and starting spots in Jacksonville and Miami. Sticking on rosters next season somewhere on the depth chart are Derek Anderson in Carolina, Dan Orlovsky in Tampa, and Josh Johnson in San Fran.



A few teams actually chose to re-sign quarterbacks from their 2011 rosters. Alex Smith and Rex Grossman re-signed with their squads, San Francisco and Washington, after their teams struck out on Peyton. Chase Daniel stuck around in New Orleans, behind the frustrated \$17 million dollar man, Drew Brees. David Carr will look to “win” another ring backing up Eli Manning, and Brian Hoyer will look for his first sticking behind Tom Brady. Sage Rosenfels hopes he made the wise decision staying in Minnesota, but will it be behind Christian Ponder, or someone from this year’s draft? Shaun Hill gives Detroit stability behind the oft-injured Matthew Stafford. And, well, Richard Bartel is still on the roster in Arizona.

An incredible list of players who always had “potential” but never played like it pepper the ~~unemploy-~~ment free agent list. Matt Leinart is out in Houston after injuries killed his shot there. Vince Young’s Super Bowl guarantee landed him in the doghouse, and now the outhouse, in Philly, with Trent Edwards taking his place behind Mike Vick. J.P. Losman, Shaun Hill, Kyle Boller, and Kellen Clemens, all former starters but hardly serviceable, are also on the outside looking in. Career backups Billy Volek, A.J. Feeley, Charlie Batch, and Luke McCown hope to land on their feet again after another season on the cut list.

Also looking for work are those in-betweeners, guys who have made a living in the league for a few years, not yet established enough to be veterans, but no longer young and up-and coming. Will Tyler Palko, Tom Brandstater, Kevin O’Connell, Dennis Dixon, Luke McCown, or Curtis Painter make an NFL roster again, especially after what is supposed to be a rather deep draft in 2012? Only time will tell.

Finally, it may be the end of the line for some of the game’s long time field generals. 17-year veteran Kerry Collins, owner of the 10<sup>th</sup> most passing yards in league history, has already called it a career. Joining him not soon after was Jon Kitna, after 15 seasons in the NFL, most spent on some of the league’s worst teams. Will this be it for Jake Delhomme, the Carolina Panthers all-time leader in every major statistical category? What about former 49ers star Jeff Garcia, a four-time Pro Bowler with over 25,000 passing yards? And is this it for former Jaguars legend Mark Brunell, his franchise’s all-time leader in yards, touchdowns, and wins? What of journeyman Byron Leftwich, and his nine injury-riddled season career? And how does it end for Donovan McNabb, a true all-time great with over 37,000 yards and 230+ TD’s through the air? In all, we could see the end of almost 100 seasons of signal calling in the NFL with these seven players alone.

If 2011 was anything to go by, 2012 is going to be one incredible year for quarterbacks. Even if another 10 QB’s throw for more than 4,000 yards, nine go over the 25 TD mark, and we get more great rookie quarterbacking like we had this past season from Cam Newton and Andy Dalton, it all may pale in comparison to the most hectic, busiest, and head-spinning off-season in the history of the quarterback.



## Enough Already! Fighting Needs to Stay!

By Drew Peltó aka \*censored\*

The discussion of removing fighting from the game of hockey comes up every year under ridiculous pretenses. Sometimes it's because of an injury in a fight. Other times it's because of a major brawl. Much of the time it's because Damien Cox is allowed near a computer. This time, it hasn't been the NHL where the discussion is happening as much as it has at the lower levels of the game. A New York Times article came out this week discussing the issue (indirectly quoting yours truly on page two).



Coming to a junior rink near you? Maybe not...

I should clarify "lower levels" for those who aren't totally educated on hockey. I'm not talking about six year old mites dropping the gloves and trading blows, or even middle school to high school aged midget players doing it. Those kids need to concentrate on honing their skills, not on how to remove another player's teeth with their knuckles. By lower levels, I'm referring to the junior game, players mostly in the 16 to 20 age range. Most junior leagues are where players begin to receive five minutes in the box for a fight, as opposed to an ejection and requisite suspension. Some have put in rules to give a one-game suspension after a certain number of fights, such as the BCHL up in British Columbia. Other leagues, such as the Eastern

Junior league in the Northeastern United States have put an outright ban on fighting, giving all fighters an ejection and automatic suspension.

On one side of the equation, I can understand it. Most players outside the Canadian Major Junior Leagues are looking to move onto college hockey first and foremost where fighting is banned. Why do they need to have it legal if they aren't going to be doing it at the next level?

But on the other side of things, this is ridiculous. Once you get to the junior levels, you have bigger players who can cause more damage with a check, or more importantly with dirty play. Fighting, or the threat of having to fight, can help to keep reckless and injurious play in check. You may not have it in college, but fights happen in professional hockey quite often. To me, it is better to be able to learn how to do it at a junior level than to end up in one at a pro level and have no idea what you're doing.

While yes, fights can cause injuries, I can name about 20 other ways of getting injured that aren't being discussed. The fact of the matter is that studies have shown that less than 3% of concussions suffered in



Todd Fedoruk's concussion is the exception, rather than the rule. Less than 3% of concussions in the NHL come from fights.



the NHL have come as a direct cause of a fight. So while yes, eliminating fighting eliminates a cause of concussions, you haven't done anything to touch the remaining 97% of them.

Fighting is a very visible part of the physicality of our game. But it is the least harmful part of it. Rarely do injuries happen from fights. Additionally, the threat of having to fight often makes players think twice about hitting a player whose head is down or whose back is turned. If the threat of having to fight in response to that hit is removed, what is to keep a player from taking advantage of an opponent who is in a bad position? Penalties? Suspensions? So far those have yet to work: just look at Chris Simon, who served a 35-game suspension for stepping on a player only to come back and get another 40-game seat in the press box for slashing a player in the face.



Think of it this way: would you rather see a score settled by two players who are prepared for what's coming via a fight, or by one player running over someone who doesn't know that it's coming? I can guarantee you, the latter situation has much greater of a chance for severe injury, even death. Leagues that have banned fighting often see more violence through dirty hits and bad stick work. A lot of things will happen behind the play where the referee isn't watching. If you don't believe me, just watch some games in the European leagues.



In 1996, Claude Lemieux was known as one of the dirtiest players in the NHL for hits like the one shown below on Kris Draper. After Darren McCarty made him answer the bell for the hit with a couple of fights, Lemieux never did anything worthy of a suspension again in his seven remaining NHL seasons.

Dirty play will never be fully removed from hockey. But the existence of fighting helps to keep injuries from it to a minimum. Unless you want to see acts of one-sided violence as opposed to two players willingly involved in it and able to defend themselves, fighting needs to remain a part of the game.



## Why I Bleed Blue...A True Story By Jody Yarborough aka Mrjobe85



I would like to start this story out in the year of 1991 around about the time of the 1991 NCAA Men's Final Four. I was 6 years old at the time and was sitting down to watch the Duke and UNLV Semi-Finals game with my dad. Before we get deep into this story, I would like to say that since the day I was old enough to know what basketball was I have been a Duke fan. Why Duke you ask? That was my dad's team and my granddad's team while everyone on my mom's side of the family were UNC fans. So at a young age, I had to make a very important decision

(all sons want to be like there dad). So I decided to stick with the other men in my family and haven't regretted the decision for a single second ever. So back to the Final Four game. Well, as most of you know UNLV were the defending National Champions (destroying Duke in 1990 Championship game 73-103) and were coming into the game undefeated. Now, as you may have guessed, UNLV came into the game heavily favored. This was Duke's fourth consecutive year making the Final Four and they had yet to win their first National Championship. Well the rest of it is history, the Blue Devils defeated the Runnin Rebels 79-77 in what many people considered one of the biggest upsets in NCAA Tournament history. I remember jumping up and down and celebrating with my dad. I thought nothing could be better than this and boy was I ever wrong when 2 days later, Duke went on to defeat the Kansas Jayhawks 72-65 to win the 1991 NCAA Men's National Championship. Not only was this Coach Mike Krzyzewski's first National Championship but the Duke Blue Devil's as well. Starting from that day on I considered myself a Duke fan for life.

Well my excitement and love for the Blue Devils began to grow even bigger when the 1992 tournament came around. The Blue Devils were the overall number #1 seed and one of the favorites to win the Championship. Then came the night when I would become a Duke Fanatic for life. The match-up was set. The #1 seeded Duke Blue Devils vs. the #2 seeded Kentucky Wildcats in an Elite Eight match up that would be remembered for a lifetime. The game was exciting all they way through and ended up going to overtime. I was on the edge of my sit as the game went back and forth. Then my heart was broken as time was winding down and the Wildcats came down the court and took a 103-102 lead with just 2.1 seconds to play. Me and my dad were crushed as we both thought for sure that the season was over for the Devils. I can actually remember to this day that my dad actually turn the channel during the



called timeout as he didn't want to have to see Kentucky celebrate there hard fought win. I convinced him to turn it back and it is probably one of the best decisions he has ever made when it comes to being a Duke fan. With just 2.1 seconds to play Grant Hill threw a baseball pass the full length of the court to fellow teammate and soon to be name 92 NCAA Player of the Year Christian Laettner. Laettner caught the pass, dribbled the ball once, turned and hit a fade away jumper as time expired to win the game for the Blue Devils 104-103.

I was shocked and just sat there with a blank look on my face. Then it hit me and I screamed and celebrated with my father for what seemed liked hours. This was without a doubt the happiest sports experience I have ever had. I loved this even more than when Duke went on to defeated the Michigan Wolverines 71-51 to become the first back-to-back champions since the 1972-73 UCLA teams. Since the Kentucky win I have been a Duke Blue Devil Fanatic and absolutely bleed Duke blue. It especially gets fun around the house win the Blue Devils play the Tarheels on a yearly basis. I get to talk junk to my mom, sister, and grandma if the Devils win. I can really lay it on them but



I hate it when the situation is reversed. They love to throw it in my face that I was actually born in Chapel Hill, NC and I always say that was completely out of my control. Then my favorite is when my grandma tells me I should pull for the "Tar-Holes" when they aren't playing Duke because we are from NC and should pull for local teams. I tell her as all real Duke fans would, the next best thing to a Duke win is a Tarheels lost. I would pull for any team in the entire world before I would ever pull for UNC. I hope to have a son one day and hope and pray that he will follow the rest of the males in his family and be a Duke Fanatic. Well, I hope all the Duke and college basketball fans really enjoy the story and thought it would be great one for this time of year.



## My Formative Years

By Michael Roche aka DiebytheCubs

This Sunday, I will be turning 20 years old. Unfortunately, birthdays now are not the momentous occasions they were when I was younger. Each year, the presents now get blander and I am less excited to grow up. While a pack of socks may make a good present this year, years ago that would never have been the case. When I was younger, I would get excited for a Hot Wheels track or Super Soaker. Those toys were fun, but they rarely lasted. Thirteen years ago though, I was given my best birthday present ever, my first pack of baseball cards.



It was the year after the Great Home Run Race of '98 and it was my seventh birthday. Like any other Cubs fan at the time, I idolized Sammy Sosa. I wanted to be him, blasting homeruns out of Wrigley Field. Even though he had been beaten out by the hated Mark McGwire the previous season, next year Slammin' Sammy was going to come back better than ever. My aunt was in town from Milwaukee that day and I can still remember the conversation like it was yesterday. As I sat down on the couch, she handed me my first packs of cardboard gold. She told me that my cousin didn't want her to give me the packs because they might have a Mark McGwire card in them. They did not, but nevertheless, I was hooked. As I stuck the cards in the binder she had also given me, my dad told me that one day

I would be organizing those cards by team, players, or however I saw fit. I didn't believe him at the time but he could not have been more right. Now that I was a baseball card collector, I set my first collecting goal that day: to find my first Sammy Sosa card.

At that time in my young life, I don't think I had ever been so dedicated to anything as finding a Sammy Sosa card. If I ever had spare time or money, it would result in a bike ride down to the local White Hen for a pack of cards. There was no rhyme or reason to the way I bought my packs, at the time I didn't know anything about different sets or even card companies. Looking through my old collection now reflects that; it really just seems to be a random assortment of whatever cards looked cool to a seven year old. I've grown more educated about card collecting now, but at the time cards were cards and as long as one of them said Sammy Sosa on it, I could not care less whether it was Topps, Upper Deck or Donruss.

I didn't have to do all the leg work myself though; I had some help from a mythical companion. While the tooth fairy would leave most kids one or two dollars for their pearly whites, she was generous enough to leave a pack or two of baseball cards beneath my pillow. Every morning after losing a tooth, without fail a new pack of cards would be waiting for me to open them. My mouth was a gold mine and



with the combined help of my trusty bike and the good old tooth fairy, I soon built up a considerable collection.

Even though the size of my collection began to swell, Sammy Sosa still eluded my grasp. It felt like years since I had started collecting baseball cards and for all the players that I had in my binder, I did not have Sammy Sosa. Then one day I lost a tooth, and then I lost it again. Another pack of baseball cards had fallen out of my mouth while I was attending mass with my family over the summer. I was as excited as any



kid was when losing a tooth because I knew that meant payday. For the rest of the longest hour of my life I proceeded through the ritualistic tissue in the mouth and holding tight to that meal ticket. As I was heading back to the car from mass though, I dropped the tooth in a pile of gravel. I could never be able to find it in all those rocks, but my dad assured me that if I wrote the tooth fairy a note explaining what had happened, she would probably understand. So I did, and she did. As per our agreement, the next morning two brand new packs of baseball cards were right there under my pillow. I jumped out of bed and snatched my binder off the shelf; I had a good feeling about this one. As I carefully opened the packs and sorted through the cards, my fingers began to tingle. Then suddenly, there it was, in my own hands: my very first Sammy Sosa card. I was so excited, I ran downstairs and woke my parents up to show off my prize: Sammy Sosa! With all the cards I had collected before then and with all the cards I have collected since, I don't think I have ever been as excited as I was on that day.

Since then, times have changed. Slammin' Sammy has moved on and so have I. Although I went through a long period where I stopped collecting, I just started again last summer. I have never made a better decision than to return to collecting. I had forgotten how exciting it was to buy a new pack: the minor stress of choosing which one to take, the tantalizing feeling of what lies between you and the cellophane, the overwhelming joy when you pull one of your favorite players. Those feelings cannot be duplicated and when you have a good experience it stays with you forever. I only really recall bits and pieces of my younger years, but the memories that are the most vivid are the ones that involve baseball cards.



**My Life in Wrestling**  
**By Michael Barton aka MonticelloCards**

This may become an ongoing weekly column for SCF members exclusively, but for now I am not sure as I need to talk to some people who are in charge here in regards to doing work for some publicity for my companies. For now, consider these free issues about all of the behind the scenes and events I attend and work.

I spent this past weekend in Chinatown at The Sun Bright Hotel. I found the only hotel in Manhattan for under \$60 bucks. You get what you pay for I guess, as it was a glorified dorm room, only worst. Then they charged me for a second night even though I didn't stay for the evening, but that is something for my bank to deal with.

Friday and Saturday were spent papering New York City for [www.northeastwrestling.com](http://www.northeastwrestling.com) and [www.rohwrestling.com](http://www.rohwrestling.com) – basically you run around like a chicken with it's head cut off and distribute flyers all over the place to get the word out about upcoming shows. It is not fun, as it involved working pretty near 30 hours straight to cover an area as large as Manhattan. But that is the Wrestling business, and it is unlike anything anyone has ever been a part of. If you work in it, you understand. If you don't, you never will.

I came back up to Poughkeepsie Saturday night to spend time with my girlfriend because I was done with my work early. I was not even going to go to The Ring of Honor show because I was so tired, but I knew that if I was able to get back to Manhattan Sunday morning, I would be taken care of, so I hopped back on the train to Grand Central Sunday morning.

I arrived at The Ring of Honor show at The Manhattan Center around 1 PM, and I immediately knew I had made the right decision. My tickets were comped of course for the work I had done, and I spent time having a nice conversation with both Jeff Jones (An ECW Original who managed Sid Vicious in his short time with the company). We talked about the boys from back in the day, and he asked me if I needed anything like lunch or if I wanted to just hang out backstage for a bit. As I have been doing this for years already, I declined and decided to go outside and hang out with the fans who were waiting in line to buy tickets to the event.

The fans are the best part of this business. I was recognized by a few people because they knew who I was from facebook or twitter ([www.facebook.com/MichaelBarton12701](http://www.facebook.com/MichaelBarton12701)). Next thing I know, Mark and Jay Briscoe come up to me and we spend the next twenty minutes talking about life and their father, who is quite the character in his own right. Then came out my close personal friend Steve Corino, who I have literally known since 1999! Steve is a veteran of this business, and has wrestled all over the world. He sees me, and the next thing you know we start talking about The Elks lodge in Queens, NY (an old ECW venue that was simply insanity). Steve is one of those guys who values the work that we do for any company, so he bought me a coffee on his dime, and he finished talking to the rest of the fans.



The show itself was awesome! Basically, I was able to walk around the entire venue the whole time. I took some pics of the show that I still need to download to facebook which I will try to do today. I left before the main event but the house was packed and I wanted to get home. I came in to see the invasion angle that was started at this show between Chikara Pro Wrestling and ROH. I had known about it for a few weeks but I had to keep my mouth shut. The “angle” came off very well. Also at the show were Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas, who teamed up together again as Wrestling’s Greatest Tag Team. Their match with The Briscoe Brothers was awesome.

All in all, it’s just another weekend for me. Coming up this weekend it’s Pro Wrestling Syndicate [www.prowrestlingsyndicate.com](http://www.prowrestlingsyndicate.com) and The Big Event II – an autograph signing featuring Bobby Heenan [www.sportsfanpromotions.com](http://www.sportsfanpromotions.com).

Feel free to add me on facebook. I am no one special, but I do get to work with some amazing people in an amazing industry. There are many stories I wish I could share that I simply cannot because they involve the after party and some things that always seem to happen that involve pro wrestlers. It was a lot of fun though.





## Sports Card Collecting - A Love-Hate Relationship

By Jody Yarborough aka Mrjobe85



I have been collecting sports cards for over twenty years now and I still enjoy it just as much as I did when I was five years old. I still go to the hobby shop on the weekend and shoot the breeze with the owner and I still watch eBay for hours at a time in hopes of getting that last second bid in on that certain card that I have been watching for a week. Heck even when I go to Wal-Mart for grocery shopping you can be sure that my first stop is going to be the card aisle. Even though I was there two days ago and know for sure that there isn't going to be anything new there since the last time. Now don't get me wrong I still REALLY love the hobby but there are a few things that have started happening in it in the past few years that really tick me off.

Now, some of these things bother me more than others but they all bother me. First thing is I really hate when a person lists a card as a 1/1 when it's the first one made, the last one made, or the player's jersey number. I mean if you really think of a 1/1 this way, all numbered cards are 1/1. I mean a card numbered 14/10000 is a 1/1 because there isn't another one numbered 14/10000. I mean is a card a 1/1 because it is numbered 3/1000 because the player on the card has 3 kids or because he is the uniform of his 3rd team?

The second thing that really "grinds my gears" are people trying to sell cards who know absolutely nothing about them but

think they do. I mean you see people listing a 1992 Topps Cal Ripken base card on eBay for \$300.00. They see the name Cal Ripken and think just because he was a superstar baseball player that any card with him on it is worth big money. My absolute favorite is the 2009 Topps Derek Jeter 1/1 Luis Diaz Sketch Card. I am pretty sure all of you guys have seen this card as it is listed on eBay for \$2,000,000 and it is the highest priced card listed on there right now. It has been listed for over 2 years now. I will cut the seller of this card a little break just because he is willing to give 20% of the sale price to charity. But let me remind you that it's only a little break I am cutting. This guy has got to know that this card is never going to sell for this price. I mean this guy doesn't even have the "make an offer" option on his auction. So many serious card collectors have let him know that this card will never sell, yet he has never lowered his price.

Now for my final and biggest pet peeve of all in collecting cards today is people making "fake cards". Whether it be people changing a card's jersey swatch/patch, adding an auto to a card that isn't supposed to have one, or making their own cards or card company for that matter. I mean what are these people thinking doing this? A lot of us who collected are in it for the hobby but we also enjoy taking the risk that the certain card we have or get might be worth something someday. People like this are the scum of



the earth if you ask me. If they need money that bad why don't they try the crazy idea called a job. Some of these counterfeiters out there are really good and know what they're doing. But some seem like they don't even care if some people know they are counterfeits. You see a certain serial numbered jersey card for sale on the internet (a 1 color swatch) and it sells for \$3.00. Then 2 weeks later you're searching eBay and see the same numbered card with an amazing 4 color patch on it for 10x to 20x what it sold for the first time. This is still supposed to be a hobby for kids! I mean it's bad enough to sell a fake to an adult but I don't see how they could live with themselves at the smallest thought that this fake card could fall into the hands of a kid. Especially these nicer cards that are fake, I mean it could take a kid's whole month or years of allowance to pay for it. It is really sad what a few scumbags are doing to the hobby that so many of us love. I know it is wishful thinking but I wish they would all be caught and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Until then we will all just have to be careful in what we buy and hopefully one day they will be able to create a counterfeit proof card. No matter all the things that bother me in the hobby the good still outweighs the bad and I am going to keep on collecting.





## **The NFL Has a Problem with the Bounties**

**By Guy Mitchell aka sweetg1**

The NFL has a problem with the bounty situation, and everyone knows it. I'll start this by saying that I agree with most that the NFL has become a league where you can't hit anybody. It's not the same football that I grew to love, where you can't touch the quarterback and you dare not hit a "defenseless" receiver. I've seen many safeties pulling up or act tentative, not to deliver the blow that they were taught to deliver for what looked like fear of being fined. For some of the rule changes, I think they were good for the league. It's a well known fact that the NFL has a concussion problem and the lifespan of an NFL player is probably 20 years less than that of the normal man. Some of the changes aren't good because we reward a guy who runs 0.1 second faster than his counterpart and we reward a guy who is much stronger than his backup, but he is not rewarded for "getting there" slightly faster with much more "zest". The defense is sometimes rewarded for being a hard hitter and a strong "finisher", but is penalized for unnecessary touching. Today's game is all about the offense, especially when they are getting 30-40 points in what is becoming an aggressive version of two hand touch football (but make sure those two hands are above the waist and below the head!).



However, the rules are the rules and Gregg Williams admitted that he knew what he was doing was wrong, but he did it anyway. The defense for Williams is this wasn't a one-time offense, as he has done this all over the league. The NFL is the one that tries to play holier than thou with suspending guys before they are convicted and for eliminating cheaters (Spygate, steroid users, and the coaches that set up blockades on the sidelines are the offenses that quickly come to mind). It correctly tries to be the league that sets the standard for fair play in an environment that also encourages hard hitting. But here you have a guy who not only admitted doing this and admitted he knew it was wrong, but he also cre-

ated an environment where guys were encouraged to hurt someone. This is everything that the NFL professes not to be. Therefore, it must set the example by banning Gregg Williams from coaching for at least 1 year. If the NFL is going to "set the new standard" for what is right, it must take the biggest offender and "make an example" of him. If the NFL gives him a slap on the wrist (like a \$10,000 or less), then what they are saying is that encouraging a player to hurt another player is worse than spying on another team or appearing on the police blotter for a misdemeanor. You'll recall that Spygate not only cost a coach his job (in Denver), but it also cost the team draft choices. Can we honestly say that encouraging a player to hurt another player is not as bad?



Again, I can't stress that I don't like the fact that the rules have changed as they have, but the rules are the rules and they must be followed.

What I see as a secondary problem is that many teams in the NFL institute a Kangaroo Court, where players fine themselves for doing certain things or for saying certain things or for appearing in the media. Most of the Kangaroo Court systems send the money to a charity or they use the money to host a party. It's sort of a fun way and something that the players do during the season. For instance, Tim Tebow was fined by his teammates when fans put a billboard telling John Fox to play him. If a player said something dumb in an interview or was late to a team meeting, he could expect to ante up. While I'm not suggesting that this sort of fun is the same as encouraging one player to hurt another player, it is the same with respect to the fact that both scenarios are "paying for actions – good or bad". They are payments conducted outside of the contract. I don't think it would be totally unreasonable for the NFL to begin looking at this sort of "payment" system next. I think it would be a shame if Kangaroo Courts were eliminated, but the league would have to start looking into ALL of these payment systems and use consistency with what they do.

