



Collectors Corner

august 2012

Feature

**Another \$100 to spend on
cardsbythebox.com awarded!**



And the Winner Is!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THEIRONHORSE4 AND BRANDONHAGEN ON WINNING THE FIRST SCF CHARITY RAFFLE



Table of contents

A Word From the Editor	p.3
Coming Up!	p.4
Winning Article: Give Bettman a Break	p.5
R.A. Dickey: Baseball's Most Important Pitcher	p.14
Hounding in the Heat	p.17
A Bumpy Return to Collecting	p.22
SCF Official Review: 2012 Bowman Signatures	p.25
SCF Official Review: 2012 Topps Series 2	p.29
SCF Official Review: 2011/12 Panini Past And Present	p.34
SCF Official Review: 2011/12 Panini Rookie Anthology	p.38
SCF Official Review: 2012 Press Pass Redline	p.43
Courtside	p.47
On the Gridiron	p.54
On the Diamond	p.57

Contributors

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Karine Hains

GRAPHICS

Jared Smith

TEAM CONTACTS

Jay Weger

J.R. Lebert

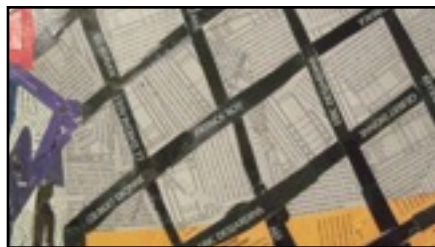
WRITING TEAM

Richard McAdam

J.R. Lebert

Sean McCafferty

Drew Peltó



Some detailed shot of my brand new Tim Carroll original

The New Cornerstone of my Collection

A couple of issues back, we featured the work of a very talented artist indeed, Tim Carroll. Back then, I reported that I had placed an order with him. Well, this week, I got the message I was waiting for, he contacted me to say that my commission work was ready.

I've yet to receive it and see it in person but, so far, the pictures I've seen look truly amazing. The final product is 30 inches wide and 20 inches tall and an impressive total of 1,927 hockey cards were sacrificed so that it could be created. For those of us who started collecting in the early 90s this piece is somewhat of a walk down memory lane as it features Pro Set, Parkhurst and Score cards. Personally, I remember vividly seeing the full version of these cards

so it's only fitting that they would find themselves hanging on my wall.

Enough about me though, most of you probably know that the National Sports' Collector Convention just took place in Baltimore last week. Next month, you can expect SCF's coverage of the event. I won't be able to attend myself by I'm sure quite a few staffers will have made the trip, starting with our two regulars, Don White and Tony Joyce. Stay tuned for our full coverage. For now though, please do enjoy the excellent selection of articles we received as contest entries this month!

For those who may be interested in hiring Tim Carroll for commission work, check out his website: <http://www.timcarrollart.com/>

THE FINAL PRODUCT IN ALL ITS GLORY

One of the best known goalie mask in history.



The netting was cleverly made up using names of former Montreal Canadiens

THE wink, June 7th, 1993 a date which is in every Habs' fan memory to stay

The back of Sandstrom's helmet, made up with several cards, including one of Rov himself

From afar, it looks just a plain red jersey, from up close, you can see plenty of little jersey numbers which tell the story of which players were used to make up the great man.



AUGUST 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 - Panini Triple Play Baseball - Press Pass Showcase Racing	2	3	4
5	6	7 - Upper Deck Ultimate Collection Hockey	8 - Panini Momentum Football - Topps Football - Panini Hoops Basketball	9	10 - Leaf Original Wrestling	11
12	13	14 - Upper Deck Goodwin Champions - Upper Deck OPC Hockey	15 - Upper Deck Exquisite Football	16	17 - Panini Prime Hockey - Leaf History of Baseball - Leaf Signature Series Basketball	18
19	20	21	22 -Panini Cooperstown Baseball - Panini Rookies and Stars Football	23	24 - Score Hockey	25
26	27	28 - Upper Deck SPA Golf	29 - Panini Prominence Football - Panini Prestige Basketball	30	31	



Give Bettman a Break

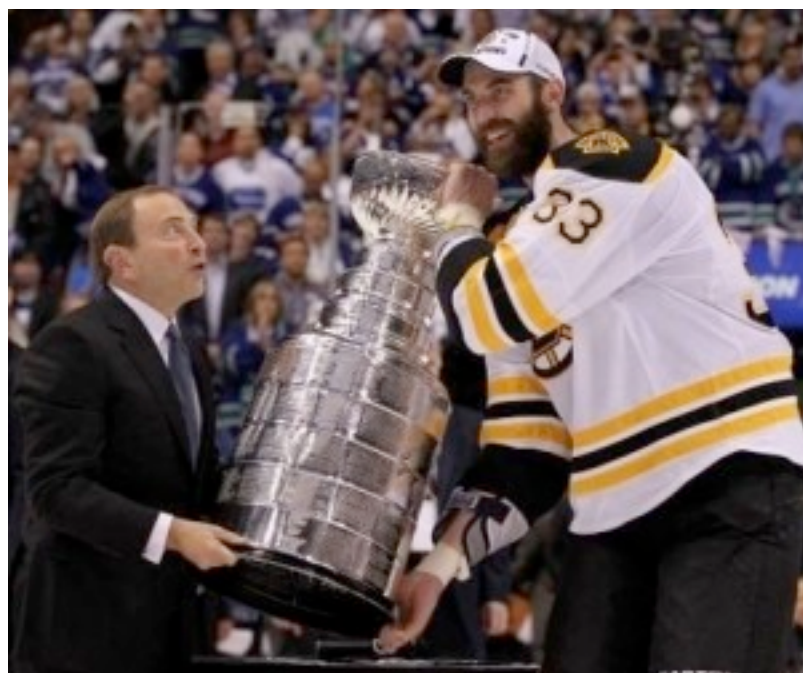
By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan

With the Eastern Conference Final now in the books, I know that we hockey fans have a great Stanley Cup final to look forward to, with the New Jersey Devils taking on the Los Angeles Kings. Both teams have performed admirably throughout the first three rounds of the playoffs, so a series with great goaltending and clutch goal scoring should very much be in the cards.

In less than a couple of weeks, we'll all know which team has won the Stanley Cup. Those of us tuning in will get to see what should only be described as the greatest team celebration in sports: when the winning team hoists Lord Stanley's Mug, and one by one take their turn doing laps of the ice.

That night will not be without a black mark though. Sure, fans of the losing team will go home disappointed, but that won't be the only sour note. Only moments before the players get to live out their boyhood dream of celebrating a Cup win with their teammates, what's become an annual tradition amongst hockey fans will continue to be a shameful embarrassment to the sport.

I'm talking about the inane booing of NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman.



Another pathetic round of boos for Bettman

I don't mean to suggest that everyone should be happy with Bettman, certainly not all the time. While he has done a lot of good for the NHL, he's also made mistakes. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, especially when you're paying hundreds of



dollars to be in the building – but when fans turn booing the NHL’s top boss into a Stanley Cup sideshow, they’re ruining a celebration. Make no mistake about it, this will happen again this year, regardless if the winner is on home ice or not.

What makes the chorus of boos even more pathetic, most of the gripes fans have with Bettman are born of nothing but ignorance.

We incessantly hear that Bettman is not a “hockey guy” and, in fact, is a “basketball guy”. I wonder if people realize how ridiculous that sounds.

If the conversation is talking about Bettman as a kid growing up, or a young man finding his way in the world, the truth is he was neither. This is not a guy who was an athlete in his youth, be that basketball, hockey, or anything else. Professionally, he’s a lawyer. A graduate of Cornell University (a school that’s done pretty well producing other “hockey guys”, like Ken Dryden & Joe Nieuwendyk) and having a law degree from New York University, Mr. Bettman was primed for a career as a lawyer. A career he started by working for a law firm for four years, before joining the legal department of the NBA in 1981. Of course this is what likely fans point to when they call him a “Basketball guy”. His second job after graduation was with the National Basketball Association. One he excelled at, and rose to be general counsel to the league, as well as Senior Vice President. After nearly 12 years on the job, Bettman received a new offer: to become the first commissioner of the National Hockey League.

If I were to be writing this story in 1994, with Bettman barely past the one year mark of his tenure, calling him as “basketball guy” may have been justified. Certainly insisting that he wasn’t a “hockey guy” would have been. With only a year of hockey experience under his belt, and over a decade of working for the NBA, anyone would have been (at least sort of) correct in making that point.



The problem now is that this is not 1994. This is 2012. Gary Bettman has been at his post for a little better than 19 years. Surly anyone capable of even a little bit of critical thinking can acknowledge that with nearly two decades of running the NHL – Gary Bettman became a “hockey guy” a long time ago. I would challenge anyone to cite what exactly it is that Gary



doesn't know about hockey. How the game is played? Please. After 19 years on the job, this man understands the most subtle nuances of the game. Hockey's rich history? He's done nothing but continue to honor it, while doing his part to write new chapters.

NHL fans under the age of 35 can't even honestly lay claim to really remembering a time when he wasn't in charge. Of course there will be those that will tell you that you have to have played the game to understand it, and that's one thing that Gary will never be able to lay claim to. The whole notion is a bunch of malarkey. You understand things by observing, by studying, and yes – by doing. He can't lay claim to the last one, but I suspect that there are few people on earth that have done the other two more than he has. An understanding of the game? He understands it a lot better than all the beer league players that claim he doesn't.

Next we have the idea that Gary is responsible for expansion, the supposed watering down of the NHL's talent pool, and any perceived problems that have come along with it.

The fact is owners like Mike Ilitch (Red Wings) or Jeremy Jacobs (Bruins), influential members of the board of governors, have much more to do with it. Heck, disposed Oilers owner Peter Pocklington, and his trade of Wayne Gretzky to the Kings, may be the man whose hands had the most to do with the expansion of the 1990s.



Gretzky's Trade was far more influential in Southern Expansion

The NHL was a 21 team league in 1990, and with the use of about 30 seconds of one's time on Google it's easy to see that the majority of the 1990s expansion was already done before Bettman even took the job. The San Jose Sharks, Ottawa Senators, and Tampa Bay Lightning were already in the league when Bettman was hired. The decision for the next two teams (Florida Panthers, Anaheim Mighty Ducks) was already made before he took office. Of the 9 new teams that hockey fans saw via expansion in the 90s, Mr. Bettman was only involved in awarding four of them.



His involvement, of course, was by design. The reason that his name was chosen as NHL Commissioner should be obvious. The league wanted to hire someone that knew how to market sports in America. To grow the game. Something he knew very well. The most crucial task of the early years of his tenure was to find four more markets to expand to.

For all the criticism he's taken for having a southern bias, Bettman certainly never showed it with his expansion choices. While he did oversee the new teams in Nashville & Atlanta, he also saw fit to award teams to Minnesota & Columbus. The latter two can hardly be described as southern.



Hockey is doing just fine in Nashville

If you're unhappy that there was expansion, nobody is going to be able to do much to convince you that it was a good thing. It certainly wasn't without its issues, and many teams (like most expansion clubs in most sports) went through growing pains. One (Atlanta) has since been uprooted, and another (Columbus) has never really had any kind of success. Some still argue that the league has only gone downhill since those 9 new teams came along. Regardless of what you thought of expansion, Bettman was responsible for only 44% of the new teams he seems to get all the credit for, and he was specifically hired to do that. His bosses (the NHL Board of Governors) wanted it.

In Canada, Bettman is met with even more hate than he is in the USA. Why? Because a large portion of Canadian Hockey fans think he has it in for Canada. He doesn't like Canada, doesn't want so many Canadian teams. He'd prefer to see Canadian Clubs relocate to the United States.

This, of course, is born from the fact that both the Quebec Nordiques & Winnipeg Jets relocated to southern American cities while Bettman was also executing the final phase of the NHL's 1990s expansion.



What hockey fans never seem to be able to offer though, is a suggestion as to what Bettman should have done differently. Both teams had owners that could no longer afford to lose money on their teams. They were playing in archaic rinks, and dealing with a 65 cent dollar. After years of bleeding money (despite good crowds at the games) they could no longer lose money, and threw the proverbial keys on the table.

“NHL hockey was meant for cities like Winnipeg & Quebec” argue Canadians hockey fans everywhere, but the fact is that the increased costs of doing business, and a low valued dollar, meant that there wasn’t a single buyer willing to step up and pay to keep either of those teams in town. Gary & the league didn’t have any choice. Allowing the franchises to be bought by deep pocketed American owners was the only move they had, save for folding the franchises.

Winnipeg left for Phoenix, and Quebec for Colorado. Bettman was to blame, but not the team’s owners. Certainly not perspective owners that knew team ownership in either of these team’s would have cost them millions per year to keep afloat. Of course the notion that Bettman wanted to move Canadian teams south overlooks what happened to both of the WHA cousins of those two relocated franchises.

Hartford Connecticut was also the victim of an aging arena, and an owner who couldn’t keep up with the economic boon that the NHL was in. Like the Nordiques & the Jets, the Whalers were sold and moved to Raleigh North Carolina, where they become the Hurricanes.

Hartford proves that it wasn’t just a Canadian problem the NHL had. It was low revenue teams that couldn’t keep up. The idea that Bettman has some anti-Canadian bias should be completely dispelled when the conversation moves to that of the Edmonton Oilers, the fourth team from the 1979 WHA merger.

The Oilers had much more success than the other ex-WHA teams. With 5 Stanley Cup in their first 10 NHL seasons, they were one of the most dominant teams ever assembled. After reaching the pinnacle of success, they became an example of what poor ownership can do to a team.

Oilers owner Peter Pocklington sold off Wayne Gretzky, drove away stars like Mark Messier & Jari Kurri, and the combination of a hated owner, a losing team, and low dollar meant the team was in trouble. Since virtually all of Pocklington’s other businesses were also doing poorly (the ones that hadn’t already been seized by creditors) he was forced to sell the team, and was looking for the highest bidder. Where they wanted the team to play was of little concern to him.



Pocklington, not Bettman, was the bad guy in Edmotnon

Pocklington's alleged choice of a sale partner was to Les Alexander. A billionaire located in Texas, Alexander already owned the NBA's Houston Rockets, and wanted to add the Oilers to his growing list of assets.

What did Gary and the NHL do? They blocked the sale, they delayed the sale, they did everything they could to slow the move down. Then he worked with a group of nearly 40 investors local to Edmonton, and facilitated the sale of the team to them. The Edmonton Investors Group (commonly referred to as EIG) bought the team from Pocklington, and ran it for over a decade until a sale to current owner Daryl Katz.

Bettman never had a bias against Canada. Winnipeg and Quebec didn't leave because he wanted them to, they left because there was no other option. The only difference between them and Edmonton is that Edmonton was able to find another option. Furthering the point that Commissioner Bettman has no bias against Canada, look at what transpired between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 seasons. A similar situation occurred in one of the expansion cities he presided over: ownership in Atlanta could no longer afford to keep losing money. They wanted out, and were unwilling to continue to run the team.

The result? The Atlanta Thrashers became the Winnipeg Jets. Bettman worked with a new ownership group to move the struggling team north of the border. Somehow this move never once stirred up accusations of a Canadian bias, or anti-Southern bias.

The relocation, or folding, of a franchise has got to be the low point of the tenure of any league commissioner or president. It does mean the league failed the fans in that city. They couldn't create a business model that worked for all teams that played. If what happened in Winnipeg, Quebec, Hartford, and Atlanta is to be held against Bettman's administration, that can certainly be constructed as a valid point.



It should be noted, however, that virtually all of his predecessors has similar issues to deal with. The only two NHL Presidents who didn't see a franchise move (or fold) during their tenure were Gill Stein (Bettman's immediate predecessors, who was President of the league for only a year) and Red Dutton: NHL President from 1943-46. Hardly men who had any kind of legacy, other than that of a caretaker. Even his peers in other have suffered through the same uprooting, with MLB, NFL, and NBA teams leaving their locals during the same time period.

The reality of this business is that the NHL has cyclically gone through hard times, and they've lost teams because of it. Atlanta won't be the last team to suffer this fate, nor will Bettman be the last commissioner to preside over a team leaving town.

Bettman is also heavily criticized for "changing the game". Fans complain about too many rule changes, breaking away from long standing traditions like the red line, deciding a game via shootout, the fight-discouraging instigator penalty, or even the rebranding of divisions & conferences.

I will not pretend to be a fan of all those moves. I think the shootout, while very entertaining, is a horrible way to decide a game. I think it's silly that the Campbell & Whales trophies go to the Western & Eastern conference winners. I also believe that most of the changes have been good for the overall growth of the league, even when I may not like them.

We hockey fans should count ourselves fortunate that "hockey purists" have never really been able to have their way for too long. Otherwise, we might still be playing the game with a rover on the ice, and the forward pass might still be illegal. Ridiculous comparisons? Not really. Think about how different hockey would be if each team iced six skaters instead of 5. Think about how illegal forward passing would impact the game. Those were seismic shifts in how the game was played in their time. Compare that to a shootout, and the Bettman-led changes look relatively minor.

Truthfully, I think more changes are needed. An outright ban on contact to the head needs to become something that is enforced with suspensions. Fighting should result in an immediate match penalty. The rinks the game is played on should be expanded to meet the international game's dimensions. Revert the ending of power plays on a goal. Facial protection needs to become mandatory. Major changes like this need to be considered by the NHL, to improve player safety and the overall entertainment value of the product.



Is the shootout really that bad?

I will not claim to think that Gary Bettman has done a perfect job as league commissioner. He hasn't. Nobody could hold that job down and be perfect. His overall performance? It's been pretty darn good. Fortunately for him, it's not the fans he needs to keep happy. It's the owners, and since they keep renewing his multi-million dollar contract, I have to believe that most of them would agree with me.

I'm not saying that everyone should like Bettman, I'm just suggesting that he should be given much more acknowledgement should be given for the positives he's brought, instead of only focusing on the negatives. When he makes public appearances, like the one he's gearing up for at the end of the finals, I just wish fans would show a little more respect for the Bettman, the league, and this game, and either cheer on their team as the Cup is presented, sit in silence if their team was just defeated, or just get up and leave the building. Stop embarrassing hockey fans everywhere.



R.A. Dickey: Baseball's Most Important Pitcher

By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert

NOTE: At the time of this article, R.A. Dickey sports a 14-2 record, a 2.83 ERA, and 147 K's in 146.1 IP.



Before this season, you may have heard the name R.A. Dickey a few times. He finished 7th in the ERA race in 2010, with a mark of 2.84. He compiled a rather pedestrian 19-22 record in the previous 2 seasons, albeit with a sparkling ERA of 3.08. And yes, you probably had heard that coming into this season he was baseball's lone remaining knuckleballer. But unless you are either a fan of Dickey himself, or a pretty fervent fan of the New York Mets, I doubt that the career of one Robert Allen Dickey would have registered on your radar.

Flash forward to the end of July 2012, and R.A. just may be baseball's most important pitcher of the last 20 years. Not best, although he is certainly giving that title a run this year, but definitely the most important, not only to his team, but to the very history of the grand old game of baseball.

Baseball has seen its fair share of curiosities. Mark "The Byrd" Fydrich, Bill "Space Man" Lee, and Jose Lima are three of baseball's biggest characters to ever grace the mound. Other pitchers, such as Steve Carlton, Mariano Rivera, or Pedro Martinez, had or have such devastating pitches that they have changed the game with their style and effectiveness. Some, like Jamie Moyer or Nolan Ryan, seemed to get better with age, pitching well into their late 40s with great success. Greats John Smoltz and Dennis Eckersley were able to save their careers with transformations from dominant starters to shutdown closers.

In my opinion, however, not since Hideo Nomo in 1995, was a pitcher as important to his craft as R.A. Dickey has become in 2012.

Nomo is single-handedly responsible for the recent influx of Asian talent to the major leagues, both pitchers and hitters alike. Had the "Nomo Experiment" failed, we may never have seen Ichiro, Hideki Matsui, Daisuke Matsuzaka, or any of the countless position players and pitchers that have been brought over from the Far East. Had Nomo just been able to tread water, or turned in the career of contemporary Mac Suzuki, we may have never had the chance to see current rookies Yu Darvish or Wei-Yin Chen. Being responsible for an entire generation of players from an entire region certainly qualifies as important. However, Dickey may be responsible for an entirely different generation of pitchers, all while being charged with saving baseball's most unique and difficult pitch to master, the knuckleball.



The knuckleball's history stretches all the way back to around 1905, with one of baseball's most infamous players, Eddie Cicotte of the 1919 Black Sox scandal, credited for its invention. Behind the knuckler and an array of other trick pitches, if not for the scandal, Cicotte would probably be a Hall of Famer. Tom Seaton became the first knuckleballer in the National League in 1912, and the following year led the league in wins, innings, and strikeouts, finishing 11th in the MVP vote. The knuckler had arrived in both leagues, and for the next 99 years, seemed destined to stick around.

In a career spanning 19 years through the 20s and 30s, Jesse Haines threw the pitch all the way to Cooperstown, elected in 1970 by the Veterans Committee. The 1940s could be seen as the golden age of knuckleballing. Jim Tobin threw a no hitter in 1944, on his way to an All Star appearance and a top 20 MVP vote. The Hall of Fame career of Ted Lyons was coming to a close, notching the final 39 of his 260 wins in the decade, while compiling a fantastic 2.97 ERA, .70 lower than his career mark. The ultimate barrage of knucklers could be found playing in the nation's capital, Washington D.C. The 1945 version of the Senators trotted out an almost all-knuckleball rotation of Mickey Haefner, Emil Leonard, Johnny Niggeling, and Roger Wolff, on their way to 20 games over .500 and a second place finish in the league.



From the 40s to the close of the century, many other pitchers sported long careers chucking the knuckler. Hall of Famer Hoyt Wilhelm racked up 143 wins and 227 saves in a career spanning 21 seasons. Bob Purkey racked up three All Star appearances, and pitched a fantastic 1962 season, with 23 wins. Phil Niekro joined the exclusive 300 win club in a stellar 24-season career also ending in a HOF nod. Wilbur Wood tallied four straight 20-win seasons and three All Star berths. Relievers Jim Bouton and Eddie Fisher dominated hitters during their long careers, mastering the knuckler out of the bullpen.

The 80s and 90s saw Charlie Hough and Tom Candiotti pitch their way through long careers. Knuckleballs from Kirt Ojala were responsible for both Barry Bonds' 400th home run and one of Sammy Sosa's 66 home runs in 1998. Even Wade Boggs threw the knuckleball, throwing 16 of them out of 17 pitches in a relief appearance for the Devil Rays. Steve Sparks, Dennis Springer, Charlie Haeger, and Jared Fernandez brought the knuckler with them into the 2000's. The reigning godfather of the knuckler, Tim Wakefield, retired after the 2011 season at an even 200 wins, tying a Boston Red Sox record with 186 wins, and striking out over 2,100 hitters over a 19 year career.

With Wakefield out of the game, that left just one player throwing the knuckleball, the Mets enigmatic Dickey. Pitching for 4 different teams in his first 8 seasons, as well as being sent to the minors twice and having his roles switched from starter, to



reliever, and then back to starter again, the magical ride Dickey has enjoyed in 2012 almost never happened. Luckily, the Mets gave Dickey one last shot, in 2010, and he has rewarded their faith with both great pitching and leadership in the clubhouse over the past 3 years.

As the last active knuckleballer, Dickey is charged with carrying the torch of one of baseball's strangest pitches. Just being in the big leagues is not enough to make the pitch last, which makes his 2012 performance all the more important. Leading the majors in wins, with 14, and having a sparkling ERA is a great start. Throwing the pitch differently than most others, using a "fast" knuckler, a slower one, and having an above average fastball has caught the eye of many major league observers.

Overcoming quite a bit of personal tragedy, including enduring unspeakable horrors as a young child, has only served to endear even more fans to Dickey and his quirky pitch. He has used the platform he has earned to bring light to children who have experienced similar fates, and this, in turn, has shed more light on the pitcher and his amazing pitch. Undoubtedly, Dickey's remarkable combination of overcoming personal tragedy, developing his unique pitch over a tumultuous career, coming back from the minors not once but twice, and now pitching at an All Star level, will serve to inspire a whole new generation of knuckleballers, and quite possibly save the knuckleball.





Hounding in the Heat by Drew Pelto, AKA *censored*

*“Sometimes these things they are so easy,
Sometimes these things they are so cold,
Sometimes these things just seem to rip you right in two
Hold on man, don’t let ‘em get to you.”*

– Izzy Stradlin, “Dust ‘N Bones”

Okay, so it wasn’t cold– quite the opposite actually. But it certainly wasn’t easy, and I sometimes felt like I was going to get ripped in two by the crowd.

For the fourth year in a row, the autograph hounding circuit brought me down to Frisco, TX on a hot summer afternoon for the Reebok Heroes Foundation Celebrity Baseball Game. Each year, various pro athletes and other celebrities come together to play a baseball game to benefit the Heroes Foundation in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The previous nine years were hosted by Mike Modano, but with his retirement from the NHL, he turned the reins over to the best of the Dallas Mavericks, Dirk Nowitzki.

Needless to say, with Nowitzki delivering the most recent championship banner to Dallas, it was an absolute madhouse of people trying to get photos and autographs with him and the other celebrities. This year’s game had several new additions, including two players from FC Dallas, a number of other current and former Mavs, as well as Modano and a few baseball and football players. New names were being added all the way up to the day before the game, which made preparation a bit tough, but for the most part, I was able to dig up cards or print photos of everyone in attendance.

It’s about a two-hour drive from my current home of Wichita Falls down to the Dallas area, so my friend Arron and I left at 9:30, after loading up on water, slapping on some sunscreen, and throwing in a CC40 CD. The drive wasn’t too bad: we arrived for lunch in Plano by noon. Vietnamese food rocks. I gorged myself on tom goi cuon and pho tai chin, as I knew I probably wouldn’t get much to eat over the next 9 hours.

In the years prior, I did some hounding outside the ballpark so we figured we’d arrive early and try it out. Unfortunately, we got there a little too early. We basically stood around from 12:30 to 2:30 with no one arriving, aside from Ben from the Ben & Skin Show. At about 2:45, security started beefing up and they pulled out the ropes. It was becoming pretty obvious that someone was about to arrive. The crowd was pretty bad outside, lining up four to five people deep inside the ropes. If you were in the third row or further back, you might as well forget about getting anyone. I started around third but slowly and carefully worked my way to the second tier as Vince Carter showed up. He signed for a few people, but not many before



heading in. Ben Grieve came next, signing for pretty much anyone who had anything for him. I had four cards and Arron three, and he signed them all.

With the limitations of the ropes and the growing number of people outside, we figured it was time just to head for the inside as the gates opened at 3. Our early parts mostly consisted of scoping things out— figuring out who's on what team, where the crowds are likely to be, and who might hit the batting cages to take a few swings. Things weren't too bad early on as players started making their way out to toss the ball around and stretch a bit. We mostly went back and forth between the first and third base lines anytime we saw someone signing, and hoping they'd keep signing long enough to get over to them. Unfortunately, that didn't work too well. On the plus side, we did see Kevin Mench doing an interview with an ESPN Radio reporter so we waited for him to finish and called him over. He signed four for each of us as well as items for others around us. I asked him if he planned on winning the Home Run Contest again this year. He said he'd try.

And try as he might, he did win again, including cranking one off the roof of the covered terrace in left field in the finals. Ben Grieve finished second, with actor Josh Henderson finishing in third. Yes, the 5'11", 170 Henderson finished ahead of the likes of behemoths like Brian Cardinal, Terrell Owens, Charles Barkley, and Dirk Nowitzki.

Before the Home Run Contest, almost every player could be seen signing autographs and I was able to reach most of them. Actor Donald Faison signed a photo for me. Mike Modano was his usual self, signing for everyone. I got him three separate times on a total of four cards (two during this stretch, two later). Delonte West was good too, signing two cards two different times for me for a total of four. And then it was Charles Barkley's turn to come through and sign a card for me.



Charles Barkley, signing for a group outside (Bruce Chandler, DFW.com)



And then, the crowd exploded.

If it wasn't crowded enough with a Basketball Hall of Famer signing and chatting it up, imagine combining that with the most beloved athlete in Dallas coming over. There are only four times in my life where I've been truly rocked by contact:

1. Getting dropped on my head in Junior Varsity hockey, causing my then best friend to swear she would never go to a hockey game again
2. Trading punches with a guy during a mini-brawl in a pickup baseball game
3. Standing next to the pit at a Dropkick Murphys show
4. When the crowd saw Nowitzki coming over to sign

Pushes, shoves, hip-checks, elbows, nearly doing a reverse header off a chair... and through all that, Nowitzki skipped my notebook a good four times as I tried to make my way down the line. No luck. Arron said he saw the crowd and didn't bother. While I was going for that, he managed to get Nick Van Exel down the line a ways. On the plus side, Nowitzki signs by mail. Mr. Postman, I need some stamps please...



The crowd for Nowitzki lined up sometimes 12 people deep (Bruce Chandler, DFW.com)

After surviving that, I got actor Geoff Stults on a photo from one of the previous years' Heroes games while Arron got soccer player Brek Shea. So at the break for the Home Run contest, I was at 17 for the day. Not too bad.



From there, it was time to rest. The 100-degree heat was taking it out of me, despite having a Camelbak full of water. But after sitting and popping a couple Excedrin and reapplying my sunscreen, we were pretty much good to go, catching the end of the Home Run Contest and seeing Mench's bomb off the roof.



Mench goes boom (Bruce Chandler, DFW.com)

The game was entertaining as usual. Most of the pitching was done by actual pitchers (one a former Baylor player, one former MLB vet in Greg Swindell, and a couple others) but once in a while, others would take a turn. Dirk Nowitzki and Rick Carlisle found they should stick to the hardcourt. Charles Barkley tried as well... giving up a 3-run bomb to Kevin Mench. Sir Charles got his revenge though, getting Mench to pop up too short on Kevin's next at-bat.

Drew Pearson was really frustrating. We each had two cards for him, and he came by and signed right near us four different times... and each time, he stopped just before reaching us. Visibly frustrated, I returned to my seat when the guy in front of me gave me a tip— head for the left field line after the game. Pearson signed there every other year.

At the middle of the ninth inning, Modano came over to our side signing for us all, including my last two cards. As Modano was doing so, over comes Terrell Owens. With some pleading from the crowd, T.O. starts taking stuff and signing it right in front of me. After getting my notebook back from Modano, I turn and hand it off to Owens, who gave me a pretty decent signature on one of my cards. Again battling a tough crowd to get back to my seat, I turn and spot Arron, who got both as well. What had been a pretty average night had suddenly turned awesome.



The game ended and we stuck around after a fireworks display just to see who we could get. FC Dallas goalie Kevin Hartman, and the Mavericks' Dominique Jones signed photos for me. As the players cleared the field Drew Pearson was still out there taking photos with a few players. after a few shouted requests, finally, he came over to us and signed our cards, capping my total at 24 new autographs: a personal best for a Heroes Celebrity Game. And it wasn't just a bunch of scrubs either— four from a future Hockey Hall of Famer, one from a Basketball Hall of Famer, and one from a potential future Football Hall of Famer.

After all was said and done, we were back in Wichita Falls by 1 am. Not a bad day overall. Every year I insist it's going to be my last hounding this event, but I still might go next year considering the big names I got this time.

About the Author: Approximately 3/4 of Drew Peltó's background is Finnish and Irish, meaning he just has to think about the sun and he gets burned, hence using an entire tube of sunblock Saturday. He currently resides in Wichita Falls, TX.



REEBOK HEROES CELEBRITY BASEBALL



A Bumpy Return to Collecting

By RiceBondsMntna2Rice

Ever had one of those weeks where you realize you're trying too hard get a trade done? Yeah me too. After some time away from the hobby, I was eager to again experience the rush that comes from making two collections better all at once.

My last trade left only good memories since it was two friends helping each other out with their PCs, netting me this card:



A modest card to most but significant because it's my first multicolor jersey swatch of Martin St. Louis.

But instead of finding my stride, I spent the better part of my return trying to head off the special kind of disappointment that only failing to reach common trading ground can bring on. You know, when you feel like you're doing all the heavy lifting, trying to matchmake card types, collecting priorities, values, etc. and agreeing to each new demand in order to

wring out a trade for cards that, looking back, you weren't all that keen on to being with? The story couldn't have ended more predictably: I'm good/no thanks/I'll pass.

To be fair, it was natural to press a little bit. After all, it'd been awhile since I last traded and I wanted to make up for lost time. But trying to force something that wasn't there wasn't working out so well. "Why was this fun again?" I wondered that night.

Two days later, bleary eyed from a long day's work and still feeling the effects from earlier, I opened a private message from a collector, featuring not one...

The Tavares FWA, flagship RC of 09-10 SP Authentic, finally mine all mine.



...but two of the cards I'd spent all last winter trying to land. Each had been within grasp before, only to slip through my fingers at the last moment. These were the elusive pieces from



two sets that I'd been chipping away at for not an insignificant stretch of eternity and there they were, staring back at me for the first time, together:

Among the scarcest RCs of rising star Evander Kane has at long last found its, if not rightful, final home.

After months of looking and months more spent away from cards, I couldn't foresee having a better opportunity to land even just the Evander, forget the pair. But I wanted the pair and that meant asking for the moon. Naturally the other trader said, "Moon, meet Sun."



He wanted maybe the brightest star in my collection for *his* PC and without it, there was no reason to proceed:



Another friend of mine had sent me that Orr autograph, maybe the the most spectacular I'd ever seen, for my HOF collection and the sentimental value it held for me dwarfed its price tag. I asked this collector of moons to pick literally any other celestial body instead. That idea didn't take, so I proposed downgrading the trade to focus on either one of the two RCs. No again. Before giving up, he asked me one final time to reconsider taking a third card as a sweetener. Probably against my better judgment, I relented and picked out a filler card in order to help justify parting with such an exquisite piece...not that any card really could.

Make no mistake, it was a throw-in at the time because I wanted the RCs so deliriously badly. But once that afterthought of a card arrived in my hands, it'd become my new favorite hockey card before I knew what'd hit me. Now, I realize that if you ask 3 people what their favorite hockey card is you'll get 7 answers, but despite our sometimes mercurial tastes as collectors any card given that label is still a special one...and so it is here.



Why this RC parallel does it for me may forever be shrouded in mystery...



Since then, the floodgates have opened and deals are pouring in effortlessly. It turns out all that heavy lifting doesn't feel all that heavy anymore when there's something you really want and you mindfully find something the other person wants just as much. Of course I've known that for some time. I guess it just takes a nice trade once in awhile to remind me of that.



SCF Official Review: 2012 Bowman Signatures

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at [Topps](http://Topps.com) for providing us with this box.

5 packs per box
5 cards per pack
Current Retail Price (online): \$149.99 - \$199.99

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Chrome Refractor Rookie Autographs
Featuring up to 40 of the most collectible rookies from the 2012 NFL Draft Class on Chrome Refractor technology with ON-CARD signatures.
- Red Parallel featuring red ink autographs, limited to 15 - HOBBY ONLY

Dual Autographs
Featuring up to 15 different cards with 2 autographs from a combination of NFL veteran and rookie subjects. Seq #'d to 25
- Gold Parallel. Seq #'d to 5 - HOBBY ONLY

Triple Autographs
Featuring up to 10 different cards with 3 autographs from a combination of NFL veteran and rookie subjects. Seq #'d to 25
- Gold Parallel. Seq #'d to 5 - HOBBY ONLY

AUTOGRAPHED RELIC CARDS

Inside The Numbers Autographed Relics: Featuring up to 20 NFL Veteran stars with an authentic relic swatch.

Inside The Numbers Autographed Patch: A parallel featuring an authentic patch swatch. Seq #'d to 10 HOBBY ONLY

Inside The Numbers Autographed JUMBO Relic: Featuring up to 30 NFL Veteran stars with an authentic jumbo relic swatch. Seq #'d to 5 HOBBY ONLY

Inside The Numbers Autographed JUMBO Patch: A parallel featuring an authentic jumbo patch swatch. Seq #'d 1 of 1 HOBBY ONLY

INSERTS

Inside The Numbers
40 NFL veterans, featuring playmaking action photography, commemorating their achievements on the field.





BASE CARDS

(200 subjects) Featuring 100 of the most collectible rookies and 100 of the best superstar veterans.

ROOKIE CARD PARALLELS

- Silver Parallel #d to 99
- Green Parallel #d to 25
- Red Parallel #d 1 of 1 HOBBY ONLY
- Printing Plates #d 1 of 1 HOBBY ONLY

AUTOGRAPHS

Rookie Autographs

Featuring up to 60 of the most talented 2012 NFL Draft Picks on beautifully designed 32-pt cards! HOBBY ONLY

- Red Parallel featuring red ink SIGNATURES, limited to 15 HOBBY ONLY

Inside The Numbers Autographs

Featuring up to 30 NFL Veteran superstars.

WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mpEYaeDNS0>

Base - 8/100

Rookies - 6/100

Inside The Numbers (1)

Combine Combos (1)

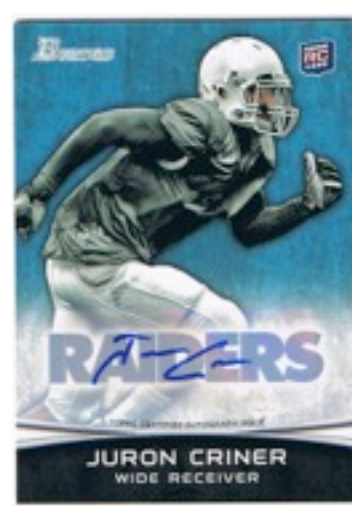
Nick Foles Autograph



Janoris Jenkins Autograph



Juron Criner Autograph





Bowman Chrome Chris Givens Rookie Autograph (on card)



Bowman Chrome Lamar Miller Rookie Autograph (on card)



FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5
Design - 3/5
Fun - 4.5/5
Value - 2.5/5
Rebuy - 2.5/5

Overall - 16.5/25 (66%)

Pros:

Five hits per box/1 per pack
Bowman Chrome cards use on card signatures

Cons:

No serial numbered/parallels in many boxes
Use of sticker autos on Bowman cards while Bowman Chrome is on card
Rookies in non-descript uniforms look awful
Way overpriced

NPN Information:

NPN 2012 Bowman Football
PO Box 785
Pittston, PA 18640

Limit 1 per household

Postmarked: 8/29/12
Received: 9/4/12

Canada Skills: $4 + 3 \times 11 - 6 = ?$

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



Base and inserts are available as always. Please view the video to see all of the cards that were pulled. PM me with the card or cards you are interested in. For the first 48 hours of the posting of this review, only VIPs can make card requests.





SCF Official Review: 2012 Topps Series 2

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

36 packs per box

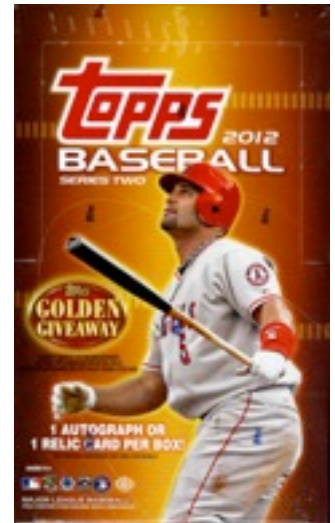
10 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$54.99 - \$64.99

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

PARALLEL CARDS

- Black Parallel (330): Black-bordered cards sequentially numbered to 61.
- Platinum Parallel (330): Platinum-bordered cards numbered 1/1.
- Golden Moments Parallel (330): A special parallel on shimmering gold foil. Inserted 1:4.
- Wood Parallel (330): The base cards printed on wood stock. Numbered 1/1.
- Base Card Printing Plates (1,320): All 330 base cards will have their 4 printing plates inserted in the product. Numbered 1/1. 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



BASE CARDS

The 330-card base set includes 295 Veterans, 30 Rookies, and 5 Record Breakers from the 2011 season.

GOLDEN RELIC CARDS: 1 per Hobby Case / 1 per HTA Box

- Gold Futures Coin Cards (15): Gold Futures subjects on cards with an embedded simulated gold coin featuring their likeness. Numbered to each star's jersey number.
- Team Rings (30): All 30 teams will be represented by their greatest superstar and a specially-designed simulated gold ring embedded in the card.
- Gold World Series Champions Pin Cards (20): Cards featuring a World Series player with a specially created pin embedded.
- Solid Gold Futures (15): Gold Futures subjects on cards made of a solid piece of real gold. Numbered 1/1.

INSERT CARDS

- 1987 Topps Minis (50): Minis featuring the biggest stars on the classic 1987 Topps design, picking up from the numbering in Series 1. Inserted 1:4.
- Golden Moments (50): More Golden Moments from the careers of active and retired stars. Inserted 1:4.



- A Cut Above (25): Striking die-cut cards. Inserted 1:6
- Mound Dominance (15): Celebrating the greatest pitching performances of all time. Inserted 1:8.
- Gold Standard (25): Recognizing players who have gained entry into some of the most exclusive clubs in baseball, like the 3,000-Hit Club, 500 Home Runs, and 3,000-K Club. Inserted 1:6.
- Gold Futures (25): Featuring young stars who are on their way to creating Golden Moments of their own. Inserted 1:6.
- Career Day (25): Celebrating some of the greatest single-game performances in MLB history. Inserted 1:6.

AUTOGRAPH CARDS

- Golden Moments Cut Signatures: 20 of the greatest of all time are featured with a vintage signature. Numbered 1/1.
- Golden Moments Autographs: 40 Golden Moments are immortalized with an autograph of the player who made it happen.
- Golden Moments Autographs Gold Parallel: Printed on gold foil and numbered to 10.
- A Cut Above Autographs: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and numbered to 15.
- Mound Dominance Autographs: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and numbered to 15.
- Gold Standard Autographs: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and numbered to 15.
- Gold Futures Autographs: 15 of the insert cards with an autograph and numbered to 15.
- Career Day Autographs: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and numbered to 10.

RELIC CARDS

- Golden Moments Relics: 60 Golden Moments are immortalized with a relic of the player who made it happen.
- Golden Moments Relics Gold Parallel: Printed on gold foil and numbered to 99.
- Golden Moments Dual Relics: 15 cards featuring two players with similar Golden Moments. Numbered to 50.
- Golden Moments Jumbo Relics: 20 Golden Moments are immortalized with an over-sized relic of the player who made it happen. Numbered to 20.
- A Cut Above Relics: 15 of the insert cards with a relic and numbered to 50.
- Mound Dominance Relics: 15 of the insert cards with a relic and numbered to 50.
- Gold Standard Relics: 15 of the insert cards with a relic and numbered to 50.
- Gold Futures Relics: 15 of the insert cards with a relic and numbered to 50.
- Career Day Relics: 15 of the insert cards with a relic and numbered to 50.
- Own the Name Relics: 500 cards featuring full game-worn jersey letters. All cards are numbered 1/1. HOBBY & HTA ONLY
- 1968 Mickey Mantle Reprint Relic: Mickey Mantle's 1968 Topps card reprinted featuring a relic piece. Sequentially numbered to 68.

GOLDEN GIVEAWAY - UNLOCK CARDS, UNLOCK COINS & 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 Digital Coins To Collect And Win Prizes!



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

- Gold Parallel: Also die-cut and numbered to 99.

- One-Of-One Truly Golden Moments Die-Cut

- Chrome Cards: A parallel of the die-cut set with a piece of real gold embedded in the card! ONE OF ONE!

One-Of-One Gold Base Set Parallel: A parallel of the Topps Series 2 base set with a piece of real gold embedded in the card! ONE OF ONE!

Unlock Digital Gold Coins: In total 90 digital coins can be unlocked: 30 Team Coins, 30 Player Coins, 30 Retired Player Coins

Collect and Unlock Prizes

The more unique coins unlocked the more prizes you can win. Unlock ten unique coins and automatically qualify for a chance to win a Ken Griffey Jr. autographed gold coin card; unlock 30 team coins, 30 player coins or 30 retired player coins and instantly win a Willie Mays autographed gold coin card.

AUTOGRAPH RELIC CARDS: All are Hobby & HTA Only

- Golden Moments Autograph Relics: 15 of the insert cards with an autograph and a relic and numbered to 10.

- A Cut Above Autograph Relics: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and a relic and numbered to 10.

- Mound Dominance Autograph Relics: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and a relic and numbered to 10.

- Gold Standard Autograph Relics: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and a relic and numbered to 10.

- Gold Futures Autograph Relics: 15 of the insert cards with an autograph and a relic and numbered to 10.

- Career Day Autograph Relics: 10 of the insert cards with an autograph and a relic and numbered to 5.

WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYG1WYCfKn4>

Base - 289/330

Dupes - 5





Gold Sparkle (9)
1987 Minis (8)
Gold Futures (6)
Cut Above (6)

Gold Standard (6)
Career Day (6)
Golden Moments (9)
Mound Dominance (4)



Mariano Rivera World Series Commemorative Pin

FINAL THOUGHTS

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

Overall - 21/25 (84%)

Pros:
Great for set collectors
Utilization of SPs is a nice touch
Excellent for kids and parents to share in the fun of collecting
Worth the money if not looking for secondary market gains

Cons:
Unnumbered "relic" when same cards were numbered in Series 1
Duplicate base when complete set isn't delivered

NPN Information:

NPN 2012 Topps BB Series 2





The Rundown On



PO Box 766
Pittstown, PA 18640

Limit 1 per household

Postmarked: 11/14/12
Received: 11/21/12

Canada Skills: $22 \times 6 + 2 - 12 = ?$

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 of their products, visit them today at www.topps.com.

As always, the base and inserts are available to the members. Please view the video to see all of the cards that were pulled. PM me with the card or cards you are interested in. For the first 48 hours from when this review is posted, only VIPs can make a card request.





SCF Official Review: 2011/12 Panini Past And Present

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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



20 packs per box

8 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$100.00 - \$114.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- A new Panini brand designed to show the extreme difference between vintage cards and cutting-edge print technology. Look for four new technology cards in Breakout, Changing Times, Fireworks and Raining 3's showcasing water, fire and texture effects!
- Elusive Ink autographs feature some of the hobby's toughest autographs, and Modern Marks autographs feature the marks of today's biggest stars!
- Look for the – draft class redemption cards for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 classes!

BOX BREAK

- 3 Autographs
- 1 Memorabilia
- 4 Break for Energy
- 3 Break for Health
- 1 Break for Life
- 4 Changing Times
- 2 Raining 3's
- 2 Fireworks



- 4 Breakout

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

COMMON

The base set is broken down into two unique vintage designs. Look for a short-printed variation design!

FIREWORKS

The players that are likely to catch fire at any moment!

MODERN MARKS

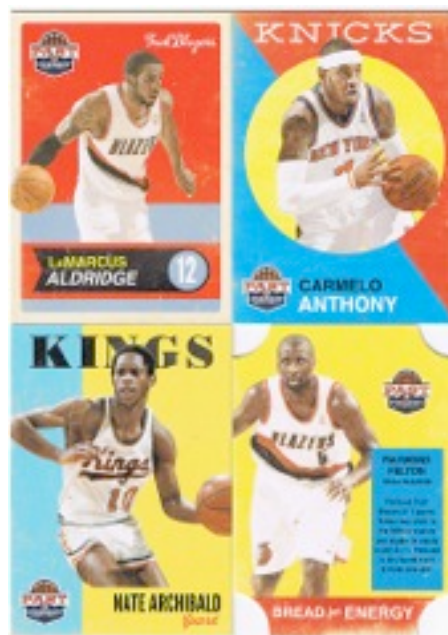
Sleek, clean and crisp designs allow the autograph to really pop right off the card!

Also Look For

- BREAKOUT
- RAINING 3's
- ELUSIVE INK

WHAT WE PULLED

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6mE4fu_8eU



Base: 135/200

Bread For Energy/Health/Life Die Cuts (4/2/2)



Breakout (3)
Changing Times (4)
Fireworks (2)
Raining 3's (4)

Darren Collison Gamers Jersey





LaBradford Smith Autograph



Tom Gugliotta Autograph



2011 Draft Pick Autograph Redemption





FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5
Design - 4.5/5
Fun - 2.5/5
Value - 3/5
Rebuy - 3/5

Overall - 17/25 (68%)

Pros:

Infusion of veterans and retired/legends
Effects designed into the various inserts

Cons:

Sticker Autographs
Questionable Autograph subject list
Lack of numbered hits
Draft Picks Autograph Redemption list will be done via a "draft" at the end of October.
Relics done shoddily

NPN Information:

NPN, 2011-12 Panini Past & Present Basketball
5235 FAA Blvd
Suite 100A
Irving, TX 75061-3601

Limit 2 entries per household, mailed separately

Mailed: 7/25/12
Received: 8/1/12

Canada Skills: $249 + 344 / 684 \times 513 - 39 = ?$

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 of their products, visit them today at www.paniniamerica.net.

If interested in any of the base or inserts, be sure to check out the video for information on how you can acquire them.

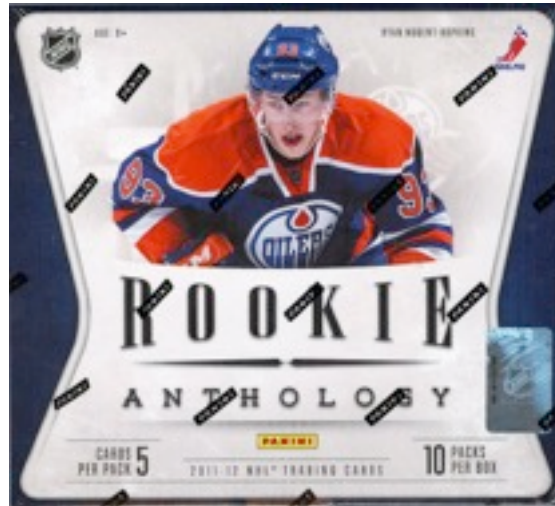




SCF Official Review: 2011/12 Panini Rookie Anthology

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at [Panini](http://Panini.com) for providing us with this box.



10 packs per box

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$100.00 - \$119.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- Rookie Treasures Dual memorabilia card delivering one per box
- Brought back by popular demand, the Crown Royale Rookie Silhouettes returns with added content
- Every Hobby Box will have a Bonus Pack delivering a guaranteed memorabilia or autograph card

BOX BREAK

- One Rookie Treasures (Dual Memorabilia Autographed) RC #'d to 499, 199 or as low as 99.
- One additional autograph card
- Two additional memorabilia cards

CASE BREAK

- One Luxury Suite RC #'d 99
- One Level 1 or Level 2 Rookie Treasure Rookie card per case
- One of the following per case (Rookie Silhouette #'d 99, Prime Rookie Silhouette #'d 25 or Rookie Treasure Patch #'d 15)
- Two to Three Limited Phenoms Autographed Rookie cards per case
- One Autographed Ice Breaker Parallel per case



PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Common Card

Crown Royale Rookie Silhouettes

Rookie Treasures Levell

Limited Phenoms

Draft Year Combos

Luxury Suite Rookie

WHAT WE PULLED

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJWQq6U_Q8Y

Box Topper: 2011/12 Crown Royale Alexei Emelin Autograph (on card)



Base - 44/100

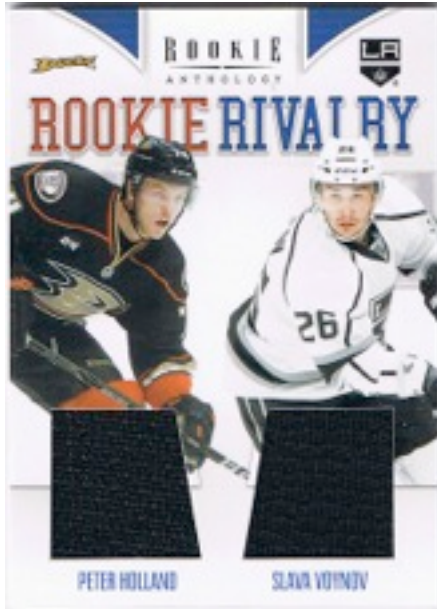
Contenders Calder Contenders Rookie /999 (1) - Stu Bickel
Crown Royale Rookie (1)





Pinnacle Ice Breakers Rookie (4)

Rookie Rivalry Peter Holland/Slava Voynov Dual Jersey



Rookie Rivalry John Moore/Jonathon Blum Dual Jersey
499



Rookie Treasures Andy Miele Dual Jersey/Autograph /





Rookie Treasures Robert Bortuzzo 1-color Patch
3-color Patch/Autograph /15



FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5
Design - 3.5/5
Fun - 4/5
Value - 3/5
Rebuy - 3/5

Overall - 17.5/25 (80%)

Pros:

Box topper (yields chances of an extra hit)
Combines multiple products into one
Very rookie driven (thus the product name)

Cons:

Design reminds too much of Certified
Sticker Autographs

NPN Information:

NPN, 2011-12 Rookie Anthology Hockey
5325 FAA Blvd Suite 100A
Irving, TX 75061-3601

Limit 2 per household, mailed separately

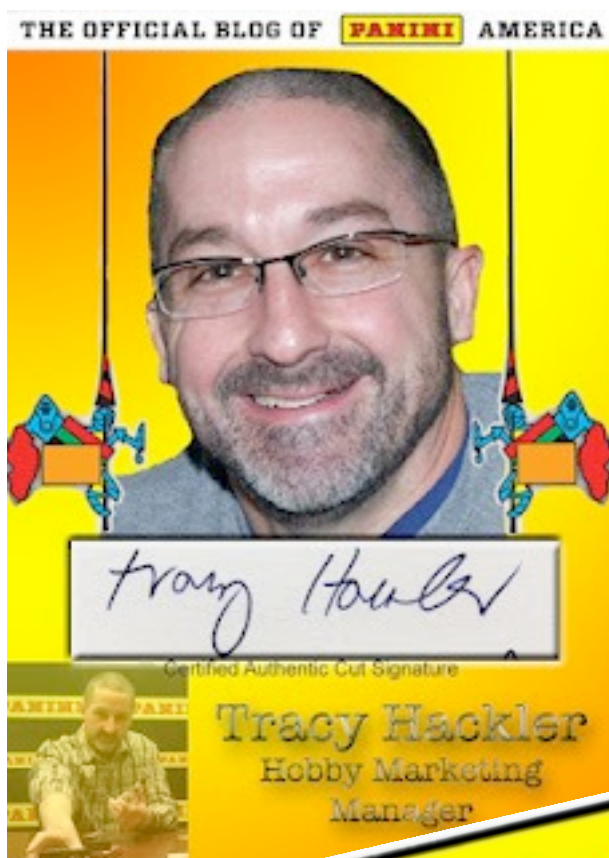
Postmarked: 8/29/12
Received: 9/5/12

Canada Skills: $762 + 652 / 326 \times 211 - 575 = ?$



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 of their products, visit them today at www.paniniamerica.net.

As always, the base and inserts are available to the members. Please watch the video to see all the cards that were pulled. PM me if interested in any of cards from this break. For the first 48 hours of the posting of this review, only VIPs can request cards.





SCF Official Review: 2012 Press Pass Redline

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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



2 packs per tin (box)
10 cards per pack
Current Retail Price (online): \$129.99 - \$149.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- Each premium two-pack tin of 2012 Redline includes two autographs and two race-used memorabilia cards from the biggest names in NASCAR including NASCAR Sprint Cup Series driver Danica Patrick and NASCAR newcomer Travis Pastrana - Pastrana's first ever NASCAR autographs and race-used memorabilia!
- At least one autographed memorabilia card per tin such as Rookie Year autographed dual memorabilia cards and HOF triple memorabilia cards featuring NASCAR Hall of Famers.
- At least one multi-swatch memorabilia card per tin including Pieces of the Action triple memorabilia cards.
- Look for short-printed Redline Signatures short-printed variation autograph cards featuring alternate sponsors of Jeff Gordon, Dale Earnhardt Jr, Tony Stewart and more!
- Upscale tin box packaging

Each 10-card pack includes:

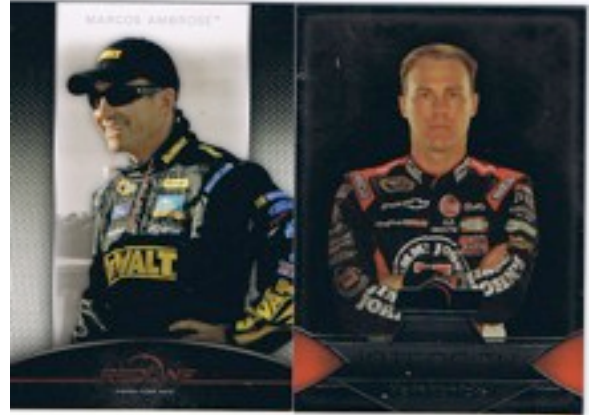
- One numbered autograph card
- One numbered race-used memorabilia card
- One numbered Color Proof base set parallel (#d to 99, 50, 15, or 1)
- One or more insert cards - some insert cards are short-printed (one per half-case)
- At least five base cards from the 50-card base set

WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBS4Fl39WV8>



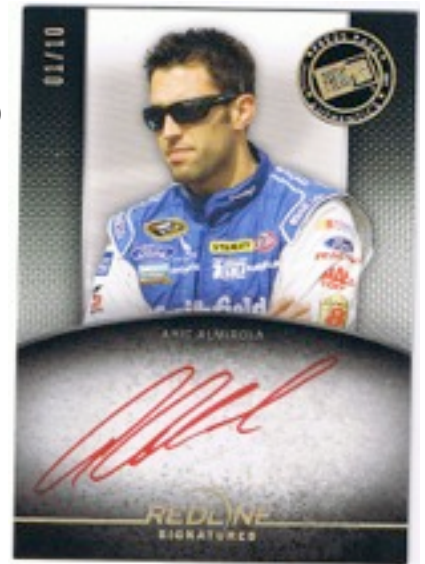
Base - 11/50
Intensity (1)
Performance Driven (1)
RPM (1)



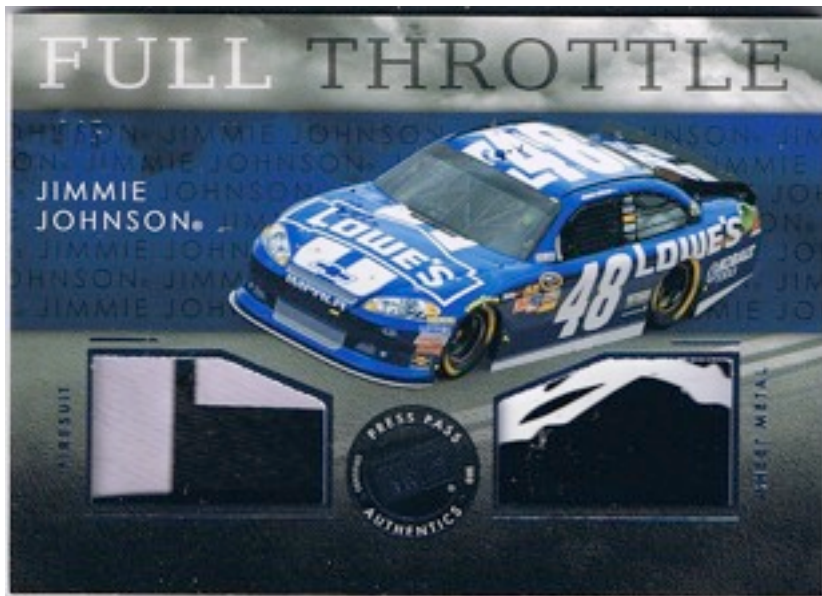
Gold /99 (1) - Clint Bowyer
Magenta /15 (1) - Marcos Ambrose



Aric Almirola Holo Autograph /10

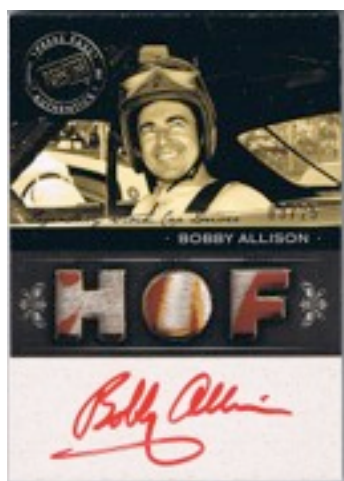


Full Throttle Blue Jimmie Johnson 2-color Firesuit/2-color Sheet Metal /5





Hall Of Fame Gold Bobby Allison 2-color Patch/3-color Patch/2-color Patch Triple Relic/Autograph /25



Muscle Car Silver Carl Edwards 4-color Sheet Metal /25



FINAL THOUGHTS

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

Overall - 22.5/25 (90%)

Pros:
4 hits per tin with a guaranteed auto/relic
On card Signatures
Sweet Multi colored swatches dominate the relics
Small base set
Very good value for those willing to spend the money on a tin or more

Cons:
Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson are redemption for their auto cards
Power Picks Pack (on those that have them) are hard to remove from the tin without damaging card
Price will scare many off

NPN Information:



NPN Press Pass Redline 2012
9115 Harris Corners Parkway Suite 200
Charlotte, NC 28269

Limit 1 per household

Postmarked: 9/5/12
Received: 9/12/12

Canada Skills: $50 + (2 \times 4) - 10 = ?$

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

As always, the base and inserts are available to the members. Please view the video to see all the cards that were pulled. PM me with the card or cards your are interested in. For the first 48 hours from the posting of this review, only VIPs can make card requests.





Contests & Winners

By Jay Weger aka Jay520

June was the finish of the 2011-12 NBA Top Performers contest which saw antheman take the top spot with 83 points and getting a 09-10 Abs. Memorabilia Star Gazing LeBron James gu/10. There was a tie for 2nd place between tk10775 and Thrillseeker with 77 points both receiving a card prize. tk10775 received a 10-11 Timeless Treasures NBA Apprentice Materials Quads Prime Turner/Harangody/Davis/James quad gu/10 and Thrillseeker received a 09-10 Absolute Memorabilia Rookie Premiere Materials (jersey/jersey/ball) Autograph B.J. Mullens /499. 3rd place was vixsportscards getting 750 CC and 4th AiThor earning 500 CC. Congrats to the winners and look forward to the 2012-13 contest coming this fall!! Also in June the NBA GTS contests finished up with the top 3 getting a CC bonus. Regular member GTS saw andrewhoya came in 1st with 15 wins and earn a bonus of 250 CC, 2nd was pwaldo with 11 wins earning 225 CC, 3rd was TurdFerguson with 10 wins (1 Perfect Score) earning 200 CC. Rounding out the last 2 spots was bouncer in 4th with 9 wins and 5th udeckcoll with 8 wins. On the VIP side gladdyontherise took the top spot with 25 wins (1 Perfect Score) and collecting a bonus of 250 CC. 2nd was andrewhoya with 22 wins and earning 225 CC, 3rd was NY Sports Teams with 17 wins and 200 CC, 4th was bouncer with 16 wins and 5th was pwaldo with 15 wins. Congrats to the winners and look forward to the 2012-13 contest coming this fall!!

Lastly the 2012 NBA Playoffs Prediction contest finished in June with leiber88 winning taking 1,000 CC. tk10775 took 2nd winning 750 CC. Theme Weeks continued through June and July with ChrisAJ98 winning Theme Week #6 of non auto/gu #rd to player jersey number. Week #7 saw So.Tex.Collector win for RC auto jersey #rd to 100 or less. realreodeal took Week #8 for a 4clr patch(excluding RC). Chris AJ98 came back to win Week #9 for non gu/auto RC parallel #rd to 50 or less. Week #10 was multi auto (3 or more) in which So.Tex.Collector won. realreodeal won Theme Week #11 of Rookie Patch Auto. Theme Week #12..... To keep Theme Weeks strong we need more participants to enter. So if you have a card that you know will do well in that week, please enter. Returning in August will be some guess the serial number contests and a new guess the card type of contest as well. So please check the basketball contest section for some new contests coming this fall.

Hobby News

Upcoming releases of 12-13 Panini products are Hoops, Prestige and Threads so far with more to follow. Hoops hits shelves on 8/8 at a price of \$68 a hobby box. Each box contains 36 packs with 8 cards a pack. There will be 2 autos per box with several new inserts such as Draft Night Signatures, Kobe's All-Rookie Team, Rookie Impact and Spark Plugs! Returning is the Black Mamba and Blake Superior case hits with Durantula added to this years set. Also first chance at 11-12 and 12-13 rc cards of a base set of 300 which means a huge auto checklist!! Prestige will hit the shelves on 8/29 at a price of \$96 a box. There will be 24 packs per box and 8 cards per pack. Each box contains 3 autograph cards, 1 gu card, and 24 rookie cards!!



Highlights of the box will include 100 rc's from 11-12 and 12-13, Prestigious Pros gu and autos, True Colors gu, Inside the Numbers gu and Old School autos and Distinctive Ink autos. Panini Threads is slated to release 10/3 at \$96 a box but info is subject to change. Leading into June with the NBA Finals on the horizon star player cards started to heat up as they usually do. In other hobby news collectors are still having confusion with the rookie redemptions. The 2011 draft pick redemptions are for autos while the 2012 is not. The 2011 draft pick auto redemptions will be announced on Oct. 20th by Panini while the 2012 draft pick redemptions will exactly the same as the 1012 NBA Draft.

Milestone Collections

Over the last 2 months there have been a few collection milestones met in the basketball section. First is gatorboymike who is a vintage basketball card collector on a mission! He had completed all the Topps sets from 1961-81 with all the cards being PSA 5 or higher last year. That is a total of 2,894 cards worth thousands. His most recent completion in vintage cards is the 1961-62 Fleer set 66/66. This is amazing for what RC cards are in the set with the likes of Wilt Chamberlain (\$800), Jerry West (\$500), Oscar Robertson (\$400), Elgin Baylor (\$250) and base of Bill Russell (\$350). He has also set his sights on finishing the 48 Bowman set in which he has 48/72 so far and the 57-58 Topps set (71/80). Next was vinny407 with 2 projects finished with one being a Rashard Lewis rainbow of 09-10 Court Kings. The rainbow consists of base/450, base gu/149, bronze /149, silver 99, black border 1/1. He also finished the 95-96 Skybox Premium Meltdown set that has MJ (\$40), Kidd (\$15), Shaq (\$15) and others like Grant Hill, David Robinson and Hakeem Olajuwon. gomiamigo was able to finish off the 07-08 UD Black Dual patch auto set that is 25 total cards with gold /5(11) and silver /10(14). This is an extraordinary accomplishment with the likes of Bird/Magic/5, MJ/LeBron/10, MJ/Dr. J/10, Magic/MJ/10, KD/KG/5, Nash/Stockton/5 and Magic/Pat Riley/5 plus many more!!! randomcards quickly completed the Past & Present Gamers set of 100 gu card from LeBron and Kobe to the smaller stars in about 2 months!! You can check out the pics at this link: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/threads/1718007-Past-and-Present-Gamer-Jersey-Set-Complete?p=11899292#post11899292>

NBA News

West Finals

(1) San Antonio Spurs vs (2) OKC Thunder

Spurs would win game 1 and 2 to start out the West Finals against the OKC Thunder. Although that would change in game 3 in OKC. San Antonio riding a 20 game win streak (10 straight in the playoffs) would lose to Durant and the Thunder by 20 102-82. OKC would win game 4 109-103 on top of Durant's 36 points and Ibaka's career high 26 points to tie the series at 2-2. The "Big 3" in OKC each scored 20 or more points in a game 5 win to give them a 3-2 series lead. At one point down 18 in the 1st half the Thunder would rally in the second half to win 107-99 earning them a trip to the NBA Finals. OKC are the 3rd team in NBA history to win 4 straight games after falling behind 0-2 in the conference finals (other 2 teams 93 Bulls and 07 Cavaliers).



East Finals (2) Miami Heat vs (5) Boston Celtics

The Miami Heat took game 1 93-79 on LeBron's 32 points in which they dominated the second half. Rondo's career high 44 points were not enough to get Boston a win in game 2. LeBron put in 32 points for Miami which they won in OT 115-111 to go up 2-0. Boston at home would cruise to a 101-91 win in game 3 because of Kevin Garnett's 24 points and 11 rebounds. A missed 3 by Wade in OT sealed a 93-91 win for Boston and evened the series a 2 apiece. With Bosh back for Miami the Heat looked to go up 3-2 but a 3 by Pierce and 2 late free throws by KG ruined the return. Celtics win 94-90 and go up 3-2 to try to close out the series at home in game 6. LeBron scored 30 of his 45 points in the 1st half as the Heat routed Boston 98-79 to make it a winner take all in game 7 at home. Tied a 73 entering the 4th quarter the Heat took over on a 10-2 run that led to a 101-88 win. James scored 10 for Miami as they finished off the Celtics 4-3 to move onto the NBA Finals for the 2nd year in a row.



vs



Game 1 saw OKC rally from 13 points down at one stretch to win 105-94. Durant would take over in the 4th scoring 17 of his 36 with help from Westbrook's 27 to take a 1-0 lead in the NBA Finals. Miami jumped out to a 18-2 lead but managed to hold off a late comeback by OKC to win 100-96. LeBron had 32 and Wade chipped in 24 as Miami tied the series at 1-1 going home. The Heat was able take game 3 with Durant in foul trouble early in the 3rd. A 91-85 win in which Miami only shot 37% but they made up for that shooting 31-35 from the charity stripe. Looking to go up 3-1, Miami down 17 in the 1st half managed to overcome the deficit and win 104-98. James had 26 to lead the Heat but got a boost from Mario Chalmers 25 as they looked to close out OKC in game 5. Up 95-71 after 3 Miami cruised to a 121-106 victory in which Mike Miller would hit 7-8 3's and a team combined 14-26 from down town (tied for the most in NBA Finals history with the '95 Rockets and '95



Magic). LeBron would capture MVP honors with a triple double of 26 points, 11 rebounds and 13 assists (first in a Finals closeout game since Tim Duncan in 2003). Congrats to the Miami Heat on winning the 2012 NBA Championship!!

A week after the Miami Heat became NBA Champions, the draft was held on June 28th in Newark, New Jersey. With the Hornets winning the draft lottery they had the no. 1 selection and there was no doubt that they were going to draft Anthony Davis. After that the draft order was up in the air as the Bobcats were unsure until they were on the clock. They took Michael Kidd-Gilchrist 2nd from Kentucky marking the first time in the common draft era that college teammates were selected with the first two picks. Rest of the draft is below.

2012 NBA Draft

1. Hornets – Anthony Davis - PF, Kentucky
2. Bobcats – Michael Kidd-Gilchrist - SF, Kentucky
3. Wizards – Bradley Beal - SG, Florida
4. Cavaliers – Dion Waiters - SG, Syracuse
5. Kings – Thomas Robinson - PF, Kansas
6. Trail Blazers – Damian Lillard - PG, Weber St.
7. Warriors – Harrison Barnes - SF, North Carolina
8. Raptors – Terrance Ross - SG, Washington
9. Pistons – Andre Drummond - C, UConn
10. Hornets – Austin Rivers - SG, Duke
11. Trail Blazers – Miles Leonard - C, Illinois
12. Rockets – Jeremy Lamb - SG, UConn
13. Suns – Kendall Marshall - PG, North Carolina
14. Bucks – John Henson - PF, North Carolina
15. Sixers – Maurice Harkless - SF, St. Johns



NBA TRADES

Wednesday, July 11

Atlanta acquired several players and picks from Brooklyn for **Joe Johnson**.

Brooklyn re-signed **Deron Williams** to a five-year contract and **Gerald Wallace** to a four-year contract. Agreed to a contract extension with center **Brook Lopez**.

Phoenix signed **Steve Nash** and traded him to the L.A. Lakers for 2013 and 2015 first-round picks and 2013 and 2014 second-round picks.

Miami signed **Ray Allen** and **Rashard Lewis**.



L.A. Clippers signed **Blake Griffin** to a 5 yr contract extension. Signed **Jamal Crawford**.
Houston signed **Marcus Camby** and traded him to New York for 3 players and two unspecified second-round picks.
New York re-signed **J.R. Smith**.
Orlando signed **Ryan Anderson** and traded him to New Orleans for **Gustavo Ayon**.
Thursday, July 12
New York signed **Jason Kidd**. Re-signed **Steve Novak**.
Philadelphia waived **Elton Brand**.
Saturday, July 14
Boston re-signed **Kevin Garnett**, **Brandon Bass** and **Chris Wilcox**.
New Orleans matched the Phoenix Suns' four-year offer sheet to **Eric Gordon**.
Sunday, July 15
New York traded **Jared Jeffries** and **Dan Gadzuric** to Portland for **Raymond Felton** and **Kurt Thomas**.
Phoenix signed **Luis Scola**, cut **Josh Childress**.
Tuesday, July 17
Houston announced the New York Knicks will not match contract offer to **Jeremy Lin**.
Wednesday, July 18
Boston signed **Jason Terry**.
Portland matched Minnesota's four-year offer sheet for **Nicolas Batum**.
L.A. Clippers signed **Grant Hill** to a two-year contract.
Thursday, July 19
Chicago signed **Vladimir Radmanovic**.
Dallas signed **O.J. Mayo**.
Friday, July 20
Houston signed and traded **Courtney Lee** to Boston. Boston traded 2013 second-round pick, **JaJuan Johnson**, **E'Twaun Moore** and **Sean Williams** to Houston.
Monday, July 23
Chicago signed **Kirk Hinrich**.
Tuesday, July 24
Chicago signed **Marco Belinelli**.
Houston announced the Chicago Bulls did not match the Rockets three-year offer sheet to **Omer Asik**.
Friday, July 27
Dallas re-signed **Delonte West**.
Minnesota signed **Andrei Kirilenko**.
Tuesday, July 31
Chicago signed **Nate Robinson**.
Golden State re-signed **Brandon Rush** to a two-year contract.



Pack & Box Breaks

The final 2 11-12 products came out in late June and July. Past and Present which released in late May had quite a few breaks in June starting with 41fan got a box getting Elusive Ink of LaBradford Smith and Marlon Wiley, Gamers gu Carlos Boozer and 2011 DP auto redemption with many star player inserts. gwdjr33 got hits of Reggie Theus and Kenny Anderson of Elusive Ink, David Thompson base auto, Gamers gu of Jrue Holiday, 2012 DP #21 with several inserts. Contra pulled hits of John Paxson and Rex Chapman redemption of Elusive Ink, Serge Ibaka base auto, Gamers gu of Quincy Pondexter, 2012 DP # 25 with several inserts. yourboibblue opened a box plus 12 packs getting a 2011 DP auto redemption, 2012 DP # 12, Elusive Ink of Otis Birdsong, Bill Wennington, Anthony Mason, Jamal Mashburn and Rory Sparrow, Gamers gu of Ekpe Udoh. ccblec got 1 box and 4 extra packs to get Elusive Ink of Kenny Anderson, Larry Nance and Charles Oakley, Gamers gu of Evan Turner and a 2011 DP auto redemption. jmintz only got 4 packs pulling a gamers gu of Ty Lawson and 2011 DP auto redemption.

RWC got a box to get an Elusive Ink of Bill Wennington, Tom Chambers base auto, Gamers gu of Andrew Bogut and 2011 DP auto redemption. McPUG got Elusive Ink of Rory Sparrow and Luther Wright, Breakout auto of Eric Bledsoe, 2012 DP # 21 and a Gamers patch of Damon James 1/25. vinny407 pulled Elusive Ink of Avery Johnson, Kenny Anderson, John Salley and Buck Williams, Gamers gu of Luke Walton and Evan Turner, Breakout auto of Brook Lopez and a 2011 DP auto redemption from 2 boxes. NoleinJax went big with 3 boxes netting Elusive Ink of Avery Johnson, Buck Williams(2), Willie Burton, Bill Wennington and Ron Brewer, Gamers gu of Evan Turner, Spencer Hawes and Joe Johnson with 3 2011 DP auto redemptions. And maybe the best hits of Past & Present came from tjthompson89 who pulled Elusive Ink of Mugsy Bogues and Hubert Davis, Gamers gu of Lance Stephenson, 2012 DP # 10 and a Steve Nash base auto!!!



Limited was the 1st of the 2 new products out in which RWC tried a box getting a Jumbo Jersey prime patch of Boris Diaw/25, Jumbo Jersey prime patch auto redemption of Anderson Varejao and a 2011 DP auto redemption. gwdjr33 pulled a Gold Spotlight Dennis Rodman/25, Limited Signatures Detlef Schrempf/99, Dominance gu of Clyde Drexler/99 and 2011 DP auto redemption from 1 box. xnameyknmx got 2 boxes pulling in 2 2011 DP auto redemptions, Jumbo Prime auto redemption of Nene/25 and a sweet Glass Cleaners prime auto of Hakeem Olajuwon 1/25! theguru opened 3 boxes hitting 3 2011 DP auto redemptions, Platinum Spotlight Raja Bell 1/1, Potential Signatures/99 of Jordan Crawford and Paul George, Retired Numbers gu of Kevin McHale/99, Trophy Case prime patch Robert Parish/25 and a Decade of Dominance auto of Kobe Bryant/99. at350zguyy like Limited so much he busted 6 boxes getting Silver Spotlight Jeff Hornacek auto/49, Legend Gold Spotlight Tom Chamber/25, 5 2011 DP auto redemptions and 1 2012



DP redemption, Limited Threads/99 of Stephen Curry and DeMarcus Cousins, Potential Signatures/49 Gordon Hayward, Monikers Prime gu of Brandon Jennings/25, Glass Cleaners gu LaMarcus Aldridge/99, Glass Cleaners prime patch Dirk Nowitzki/25, Team Trios prime patches of Paul/Ellis/Rondo and Nash/Marion/Amare both /15.

11-12 Gold Standard was the other new product opened. McPUG pulled a 2011 DP auto redemption, 2012 DP # 7, 14k gu /75 of Scottie Pippen, and a Gold Rush 24k gold piece of Andrew Bogut /49 from a box of Gold Standard. ncapps opened a box getting hits of an 2011 DP auto redemption, 2012 DP #27 redemption, 14 K gu /99 of Alonzo Mourning and Private Signings Pat Riley. theguru bought 3 boxes with the major his being Gold Stars gu/149 of Kevin Garnett, 4 2011 DP auto redemptions, Gold Stars prime patch/25 of Al Jefferson and Signs of Gold /25 of Clyde Drexler. legend33 bought a case of 11-12 Gold Standard hauling in several hits like 6 2012 DP redemptions #1,8,16,19,22,and 30, 11 2011 DP auto redemptions, Platinum base parallel /10 of Kevin Durant, Black Gold gu/149 of John Wall and LeBron James, Private Signings of Toni Kukoc, Marks of the Hall of Robert Parish/149 and Alex English/99, Gold Stars prime patch Tony Parker/25, Kevin Love/25, Derrick Rose 14k gold piece/49!!!





Denver Set to Become Peyton's Place

By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert



Well before the 2012 NFL Draft, the writing seemed to be on the wall. The icon was aging, although his level of play was as good as ever. The injuries had mounted up, and uncertainty in his ability to recover and return to form was growing. There, waiting in the wings, seemed to be the newer, shinier version, and Peyton Manning was eventually replaced by fellow #1 overall pick Andrew Luck.

Enter John Elway. The man knows quarterbacks. After all, he is one of the names mentioned in the conversation of greatest of all time at his position. Now the Executive Vice President of Football Operations (read: the guy who makes personnel decisions), Elway had the unique ability of killing two birds with one stone. Had he gone with any other free agent signal caller, the decidedly pro-Tim Tebow fan base in Denver would erupt with disapproval, but not Peyton Manning. No, the fanatics in Denver would certainly salivate

at the prospect of watching the 6'5", 230 pound quarterback with the laser rocket arm on Sundays. The one player who could make the fans not only forget the Church of Tebow, worship at an entirely new altar, was available for the taking, and the two-time Super Bowl champ was not about to let him out of his sights.

Denver has become Peyton's Place.

Looking back at the franchise's recent past, to say Denver has had a bit of a revolving door at signal caller since Elway's retirement is like saying the Lions have had a bit of a problem with the law this offseason. Here is the list of Broncos' who have thrown a pass since 1999, the first year A.E., after Elway: Brian Griese, Chris Miller, Bubby Brister, Gus Frerotte, Jarious Jackson, Steve Beuerlein, Jake Plummer, Danny Kanell, Bradlee Van Pelt, Jay Cutler, Patrick Ramsey, Chris Simms, Kyle Orton, Tim Tebow, and just for good measure, 4 different wide receivers and 2 punters. 20 different players!

In the 16-year Elway Era, fans were spoiled. For most of Elway's career, he started, and Gary Kubiak backed him up, usually by holding the clipboard and staying off the field. While 11 other quarterbacks did throw passes, including Griese and Brister, the starter was never in doubt, and there were never rumblings of a controversy. In the 13 years since, only two quarterbacks, Jay Cutler and Jake Plummer, started all 16 games for the club.

To put things in "Peyton Perspective," from his rookie season, 1998, through 2010, before his neck injury, Manning missed exactly ZERO starts. Every Sunday, for 13 seasons, Peyton was there, in his All Pro form. Eight of the thirteen seasons resulted in 12 or more wins. Eleven seasons of 4,000+ passing yards, with his career high of 4,700 yards coming in his final



season with Indy. Every season, Peyton tallied at least 26 TDs, and a high of 49 in 2004. His final 8 seasons in a Colts uniform were all above 91 in passer rating. The bottom line is this: Peyton Manning may very well be the greatest *regular season* quarterback of all time.

Being the greatest regular season passer ever is not what Elway sees in the cards for Peyton. To quote the 2-time Super Bowl champion, Elway wants to “make Peyton Manning the best quarterback ever to play the game.” In order for that to be the case, both Elway and Manning know Peyton needs more rings to go with his many records. After all, sitting across the dinner table in the offseason is his little brother Eli, with double the amount of rings in SIX less seasons. His new boss ended his career picking up two of his own, riding off into the sunset a champion. Packer Bart Starr was part of five NFL



championship teams, both before and during the Super Bowl era. Legend Joe Montana has four. Tom Brady has three, and fellow contemporary Ben Roethlisberger has two. But after a stellar 14 years in the NFL, Peyton Manning has only one title, a disappointment by most people’s standards, other than Dan Marino.

Of course, although those quarterbacks all have more Super Bowl wins than Manning, none of those greats can hold a candle to Peyton’s numbers in the

regular season. Picking up Peyton this offseason is shaping up to be somewhat of a marketing coup for Denver as well, much like the Yankees had hoped it would be for Alex Rodriguez, as Peyton marches further up the record books and past some of the greatest records in the game. While seeing #18 in a Denver Broncos jersey will take a little getting used to, he is on the



doorstep of some impressive career totals. His very next touchdown pass will be #400, a feat only two other quarterbacks have reached, Dan Marino (420) and Brett Favre (508). Even a career low 22 TD passes this year will allow him to pass Marino, and no doubt the Broncos will market the chase all season long. With an 8-8 season in 2012, Manning will also pass both Marino (147) and Elway (148) for #2 on the wins chart.

The big records are all held by Favre, and chasing the marks for TD passes, yards, completions, and wins will all be huge marketing opportunities of Denver. If Manning can play five healthy, productive seasons, averaging 85% of the numbers he put up for 13 years in Indy, all 3 major passing records will be his, as will the all-time wins mark. The Broncos will be able to reap both the on-field

benefits, and the benefits on their bottom line. Fans will sell out each game, hoping to see Peyton make history, and with the improved product on the field, it's a win-win for Elway and the brass.

While Elway's place as the unquestioned franchise leader is secure, the next five seasons in Denver could cement John's goal for Peyton as the clear G.O.A.T., a passer who will both hold all of the major passing records, and, with just one or two more Super Bowl wins, will have the jewelry to go with the numbers. Peyton will put up the numbers, and if he can win the big games, the real battle will be for #2 all time.





Mike Trout's Rookie Season

By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert



Have you ever heard of George Watkins? Sounds a lot like a local Congressman, or maybe a long time television actor, right? Well, unless you guessed rookie ballplayer for the 1930 St. Louis Cardinals of the National League, you would be dead wrong.

Why am I bringing up a pre-war ballplayer with fewer than 900 career games played? Because until Mike Trout this year, no other rookie since 1901, playing in more than 80 games had put up these video game type numbers: .350+ AVG, .410+ OBP, .600+ SLG, and 15+ HRs. That's 112 years of history, with thousands of players, and the list is now up to a gaudy two, if Trout can hold his current numbers. That's it, Mike Trout and George Watkins, though Watkins had only played in 117 games.

One major difference between these two, however, is this: Mike Trout is having one of the greatest rookie seasons in ML history.

NOTE: At the time of this article, Mike Trout had played in 78 games, and his line reads .354/.411/.601.

There is a very short list of greatest rookie seasons of all time, since the inception of the ROY award in 1947. Jackie Robinson, 1947. Fred Lynn, 1975. Mike Piazza, 1993. Nomar Garciaparra, 1997. Albert Pujols and Ichiro Suzuki, 2001. After this season, it will be time to add Mike Trout to that very short list.

There are quite a few factors that play into my assertion. One quick caveat:

While the rookie seasons of Hideo Nomo, Dwight Gooden, Herb Score, and Don Newcombe are also quite incredible, I am looking only at position players. Also, while the ROY is an individual award, you must also have had an impact on your team, or on baseball. You need to either play a tough defensive position, play fantastic defense, or both. Lastly, your numbers need to look like a video game. It's not enough to just hit .300 or lead your *team* in a category or two.

Jackie Robinson's 1947 season needs no explanation. While enduring unimaginable stress and ridicule being baseball's first black ballplayer, he led the NL in SBs and sacrifice hits, and led his team to the NL pennant, falling in seven games to the Yankees. Further emphasizing his importance, despite plenty of writers who refused to vote for a player of color, Jackie still finished 5th in the MVP voting.



Fred Lynn ignited baseball in Boston in 1975. After finishing 3rd in the NL East in 1974, Lynn led Boston to an 11-win improvement and the World Series, losing to the Big Red Machine in seven. On the individual front, Lynn led the majors in doubles and SLG, and led the AL in runs and OPS, all while being selected an All Star and winning a Gold Glove playing center field. Most remarkably, Lynn became the first rookie to be named league Most Valuable Player.

Mike Piazza's career as the greatest offensive catcher of all time began in 1993 with a bang. Leading the Dodgers to an 18-win improvement, Piazza won the Silver Slugger award while hitting .318 with 35 HRs and 112 RBIs, was named an All Star and the NL ROY, and finished 9th in the MVP vote. Not bad at all for a 62nd round draft pick.

Though there wasn't an improvement in the team's won/loss record in 1997, the Red Sox had a phenom at shortstop in Nomar Garciaparra. He led the majors in ABs, the AL in hits and triples, and hit .306 with 30 HRs and 44 doubles, while also being selected an All Star and Silver Slugger and finishing 8th in the MVP vote.

The 2001 season saw the ML debut of two players who would go on to have not only two of the 8 greatest rookie seasons ever, but who would establish themselves as two of baseball time greats. Albert Pujols' Cardinals were already a powerhouse, winning 95 games the season before and 93 in his debut year, but adding his bat and glove to the order every day certainly made an impact. Though he didn't lead the league in a single category, his slash lines read .329/.403/.610, going with totals of 194 hits, 37 HRs, 130 RBIs, and 112 runs scored. He finished 4th in the MVP vote, taking home an All Star nod and Silver Slugger award.

Ichiro Suzuki would go on to accomplish several notable feats in his rookie campaign. Improving on a 91-win season can be quite difficult, but the addition of the Japanese center fielder led to an AL best 116 wins, an unreal 25 win uptick. Unreal would also describe his individual numbers. A major league best 242 hits and 56 stolen bases to go with an AL leading .350 AVG. He was also the hardest to strike out, averaging over 13 ABs/K. He took home every major award, winning a Gold Glove, Silver Slugger, the ROY, and the 2001 AL MVP.

The Japanese import's rookie year is widely considered the best ever, with an asterisk possibly given because of his years as a pro in Japan. It may be time for him to move over, however, with the addition of Mike Trout. After 20 games, the Anaheim Angels had 6 wins, a .300 winning percentage, and a lack of offense. Certainly, there was a bit of skepticism in calling up the rookie who's cup of coffee the year earlier led to a .220 AVG and an 88 OPS+ (100 is league average). Boy, were those skeptics wrong.

In games Trout has played, the Angels are 47-31, for a .603 winning percentage. Though he has a 20 game deficit to make up on the rest of the league, Mike Trout leads the MAJORS in runs, SBs, and WAR, looking to become the first rookie since the ROY award to lead the lead in WAR. He also leads the AL in AVG and OPS+, and is second in triples and OBPS. Imagine if he had those 20 games! His defense in the outfield has produced the leading Web Gem on ESPN's Baseball Tonight, and has accounted for numerous runs saved. The Angels have also closed the gap on the Rangers, the two-time reigning AL Champs, to just 4 games, after being down by double digits, and are in the lead for one of the two Wild Card spots.

Trout has become the most watched player in the league, whether it's for his stolen base prowess, his incredible range in the outfield, or to watch him run out a triple in the gap. He scored in an AL and rookie record 15 straight games. His road AVG is



Mike Trout.”

higher than his home number, and has, amazingly, increased every month this season, all the way up to .405 in July thus far, with an incredible .464 OBP.

It remains to be seen whether Trout will win the MVP or Gold Glove awards, but he already seems a lock to win the Silver Slugger and ROY awards, despite the new Japanese sensation Yu Darvish’s rookie performance. If the Angels are able to catch the Rangers, or at least run away with the Wild Card, the MVP could certainly be in the cards.

Speaking of cards, following hot on the heels of Strasburg and Harper, Trout’s cards have soared past them both on their way to him being the hottest player on cardboard, or foilboard, or whatever else his stuff his printed on. Every single one of his rarest cards, whether from his pre-rookie years 2009 and 2010, or his rookie year of 2011 have absolutely skyrocketed. With literally hundreds to choose from, owning one isn’t tough, but owning a rare one will set you back a car or rent payment for sure.

Oh, and if all of this wasn’t enough, Mike Trout is also the youngest player in the American League, at just over 20 years old. We could be looking at the next Pete Rose or Willie Mays, but something tells me that in 20-30 years, people will be saying, “We could be looking at the next

