

february 2013

Collectors Corner

Inside

LET US IN!

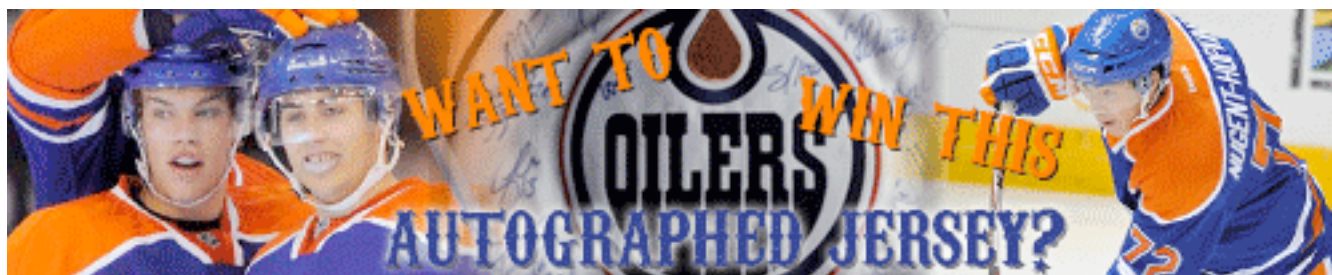
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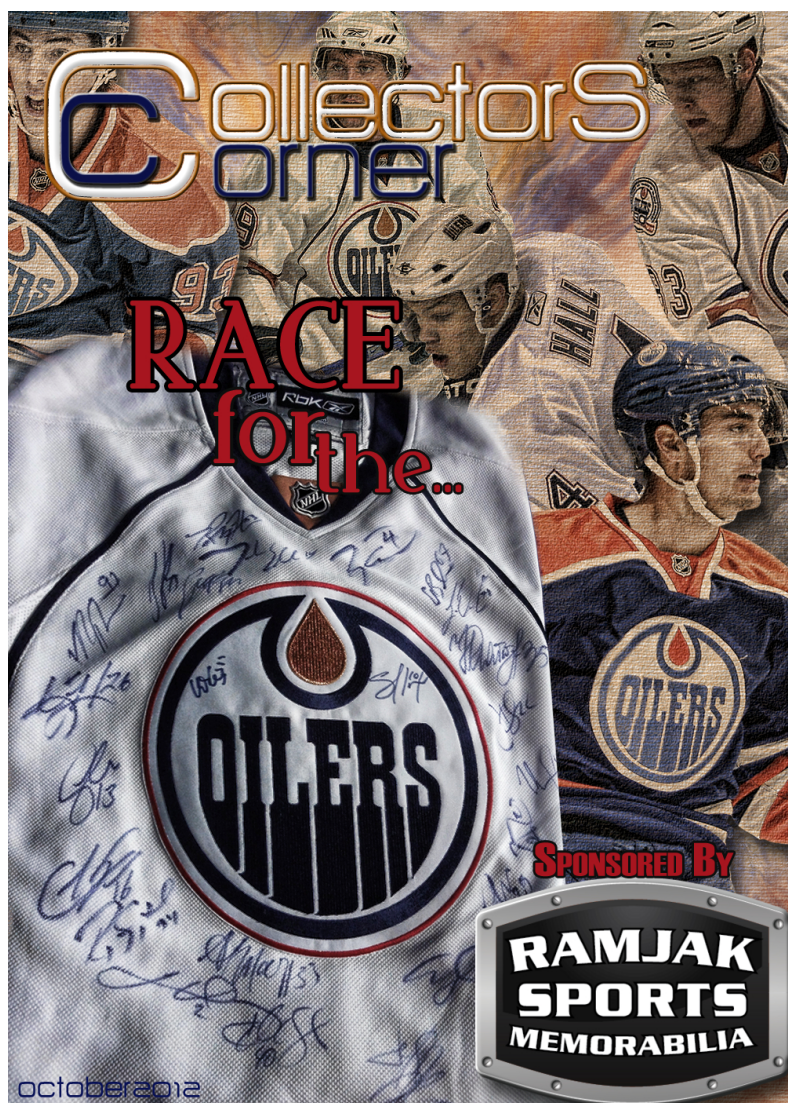
Super Bowl



XLVII



THERE IS STILL TIME TO ENTER THE JAUNT FOR THE JERSEY, UP TO 25 POINTS UP FOR GRABS IN THE WRITING CONTEST! HERE'S HOW TO ENTER: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/threads/1853582-Leg-2-of-the-Jaunt-for-the-Jersey-Writing-contest!>



A Word from the Editor

Rinkside

At Last, my Lonely Days Are Over

Eastern Conference Predictions

On the Gridiron

Courtside

P.K. Subban and his Future in Montreal

On the Diamond

Around the Track

Review 2012/13 Panini Classic Signatures Hockey

Review 2012 Topps Strata Football

Review 2012/13 Panini Prizm Basketball

Review 2012 Bowman Sterling Baseball

Beckett Bulk Grading Submission

The Bob

My History of Parallel Sets

Random Rants: Treve d'émotions

p. 4

p. 5

p. 9

p. 13

p. 15

p. 18

p. 25

p. 31

p. 35

p. 38

p. 42

p. 47

p. 51

p. 58

p. 59

p. 62

p.64

Editor and publisher

Karine Hains

Writing Team

Richard McAdam

Sean McCafferty

Graphics

Jared Smith

Team Contacts

Stephen Taylor

Jay Weger

J.R. Lebert

Richard McAdam

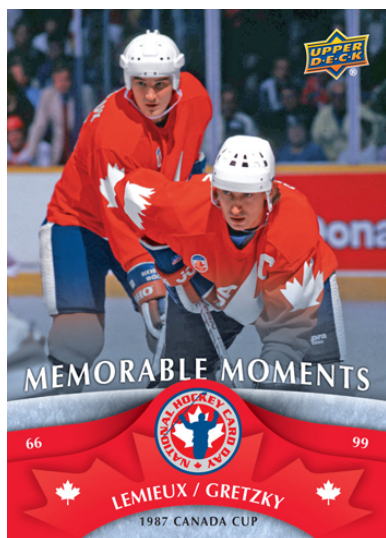




Finally!

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

Fresh of a month off, the Collectors Corner is back with a brand new issue and aren't we glad we took a break considering everything we had to cover in this issue! Firstly, the lockout in the NHL has ended (at last), the Super Bowl will feature the Ravens and the 49ers (at the time of writing, it's not been played yet...my money is on San Francisco), baseball caught some headlines (once more not for the right reason...see the On the Diamond section) and P.K. Subban has finally signed his contract (I still left the excellent article wrote by our very own Richard McAdam in this issue because he was once again spot on!). So you will read about all this and more in the next 60 odd pages!



I'd like to take a bit of time to tell you about National Hockey Card Day brought to us by Upper Deck. The date is fast approaching as it is scheduled for February 9th in Canada (right on hockey day in Canada). On the day, customer who visit their local card shops will receive free cards issued by Upper Deck for the occasion. In those packs, there will also be randomly inserted autographs (very rare however) but you know the chase will be on! Many shops will also offer special discounts to celebrate the event so make sure to check with them to know what kind of surprise they have in store for you! Once you've been to the card store though, make sure to head home not only to bust some packs but also to watch a full day of hockey! I don't know about you but I've already invited my friends over and bought plenty of wings for the day (must remember to get some beer).



Fear not, if you are in the States, you'll have your National Hockey Card Day too but it will be on February 16th, again Upper Deck has produced cards for the occasion which you'll be able to get at your local card shop!

Should you fail to get some of these cards, I'd suggest keeping an eye on the Hockey contest forum, I have a feeling that the hockey team may just have a contest or two which would allow you to get some packs!

I hope you enjoy those two upcoming exciting days and make sure to drop by the Show and Tell to brag about what you get on the day!





Game On!

by Richard McAdam aka RGM81



113 days. 625 games cancelled. Over \$800 million in lost salaries. Over \$1.5 billion in lost revenues. NHL Podium Twitter accounts. Gary Bettman on an escalator. Exasperated players. Angry fans. #DregerFace Steve Fehr's ugly sweater. A European exodus. Disenchanted fGame On!

by RGM81 aka Richard McAdam

113 days. 625 games cancelled. Over \$800 million in lost salaries. Over \$1.5 billion in lost revenues. NHL Podium Twitter accounts. Gary Bettman on an escalator. Exasperated players. Angry fans. #DregerFace Steve Fehr's ugly sweater. A European exodus. Disenchanted fans. Hopes raised. Hopes crushed. Hills to die upon.

These are the things that have dominated the hockey landscape for the past several months. Instead of tracking goals and assists, and debating who will win the Cup,

fans have been discussing the merits of a 50/50 hockey related revenue split, contract term limits, and salary variance. These are not the normal vernacular for sports fans. Fortunately, by the time you read this hopefully they will be little more than a distant memory of a time we hockey fans would all like to forget. By now you may have forgiven the NHL and the NHLPA for depriving you of the first three months of the 2012-13 NHL season, and by now you may be enjoying watching your favourite team build momentum towards a playoffs run in a shortened campaign.

The 2012-13 NHL lockout was often characterized as "stupid," "pointless," "ridiculous," "unnecessary," and many other negative terms. Indeed, other than redistributing portions of a \$3.3 billion revenue pie so that the owners all received a larger share, it has often been difficult for fans to understand why they were seeing their favourite professional sports league put through another highly contentious labour dispute that was resulting in the loss of hockey action. Of course, to those owners whose teams were not only not profitable, but indeed hemorrhaging millions of dollars annually, a "correction" of sorts was not only necessary but long overdue. While many fans may not have much sympathy for the wealthy owners of the Florida Panthers, St. Louis Blues, or other teams consigned to operating deep in the red on an annual basis, these franchises were very dependent upon changes to the collective bargaining agreement in order to remain viable in their existing markets over the long haul.

The key provisions of the new CBA will allow for a possibility of greater competitive balance among the NHL's 30 teams. Thanks to an increased revenue sharing pool, which got larger to the tune of \$200 million, the financial burden of fielding a competitive hockey team in a small market is lessened. The loyal fans of the Blues, the Predators, and other beneficiaries of revenue sharing deserve to enjoy watching strong teams with star players, rather than see them serve as glorified farm teams to develop young prospects until the larger teams can sign them during their prime years to more lucrative contracts. In addition to revenue sharing, the new measures regarding contract term limits and salary variance will prevent teams from cheating the salary cap by signing marquee players to long-term back-diving contracts. The absurd 14-year contract signed by Shea Weber (forced upon the Predators by the larger-market Flyers) will be the last of its kind, and general managers will now have some restraints imposed upon their reckless spending habits. Even with the



pair of “get out of jail free” cards granted by the two amnesty buyouts granted each team to become compliant with the \$64.3 million salary cap established for 2013-14 (which have already been put to use by the New York Rangers and Montreal Canadiens, to free themselves of the contracts of Wade Redden and Scott Gomez, respectively), many teams will have to find new creative ways to lock up their stars.

So far, the new cap environment has made life difficult for three general managers in particular: Marc Bergevin of the Montreal Canadiens, Joe Nieuwendyk of the Dallas Stars, and Greg Sherman of the Colorado Avalanche. Emerging from the lockout, each of these men has faced the difficult task of signing a star restricted free agent that has just come off his entry level contract. It was hoped by some that the “second contract” would return to its prior status as a bridge towards a contract that locks up the League’s young talent for UFA years or at a minimum, keeps salaries in check to free up the team to pursue other free agents. In recent years, due to the rapid emergence of young talent that merits a long-term contract as soon as possible, that old model has been somewhat tossed by the wayside by general managers eager to retain their youthful face of the franchise calibre players for the long haul. Players like Steven Stamkos and Tyler Myers both got huge deals under the old system, and have seemingly set the bar for the three players who are presently not on the ice for their teams. Fans want to see P.K. Subban, Jamie Benn, and Ryan O’Reilly playing, but the players also want to be compensated in line with their peers who also cashed in coming off their entry level deals. They each seem to prefer a long-term deal that keeps them in their current city and want the dollars that matches their importance to their respective clubs. How Bergevin, Nieuwendyk, and Sherman handle these situations will be a big challenge for them to see how far the organizations can go to restore a sense of balance and reason (from their perspective) in these second contracts. Benn has received a 5-year contract for \$26.25M (a \$5.25M cap hit) but Subban and O’Reilly are still in negotiations for a new deal.



The general managers responsible for signing these three young stars have an immediate challenge coming out of the lockout, as signing them to their new contracts is an urgent priority.

While two of those young stars remain grounded, the action on the ice has drawn the fans back in much more quickly than some dire prognosticators had suggested. For all the talk some aired about the damage done to the game or boycotts or refusing to watch games, much of it has turned out to be just that: talk. The Hockey Night in Canada season opener between the Canadiens and the Maple Leafs drew the highest audience of any CBC broadcast of a regular season NHL game ever. The Pittsburgh Penguins home opener drew the largest crowd at the Consol Energy Center ever. People flocked by the thousands to NHL arenas to watch intra-squad practice games – in Montreal’s case, they lined up starting



at 6am in -20C degree weather to see a glorified practice game. While there may still be some resentment held by some fans, clearly the extent to which NHL hockey was missed was demonstrated by how quickly many people have returned to embrace the beautiful game. We won't know the financial impact of the lockout for several months, but it appears that for the time being it will be minimized as fans consume as much hockey as possible to make up for the lost time due to the lockout.

The impact on the hobby that the end of the lockout will have will also take some time to determine. The 2012-13 product schedule has been somewhat lacklustre in no small part due to the lack of high-level rookie cards. Complain as one may about the emphasis placed on rookie content in card releases, they do drive the hobby and generate sales. With only a couple of holdover rookies to sell product in the first half of the campaign, rookie-oriented releases seemed stagnant. People were hedging their bets that the end of the lockout would bring the likes of Nail Yakupov, Alex Galchenyuk, and others to the card season's back end – which just happened to be some of the higher-end releases like SP Authentic or Prime. Hobby shops across North America had felt an impact, as their business dropped off sharply due to hockey's absence. Optimism thus reigned when the NHL and the NHLPA announced Game On.



Rookie cards featuring Nail Yakupov (left), Brendan Gallagher, Alex Galchenyuk (right) and other young stars who debuted during this lockout-shortened campaign won't appear until later this year.

Those hopes of a quick recovery and turnaround for this season's releases were quickly dashed, however, when the PA put out an announcement that they were limiting the licensees to including rookies who had debuted before the end of the 2012 Stanley Cup Finals and that the 2013-14 hobby calendar would be a "double class" that included players who debuted in the shortened 2013 season and in the early days of the 2013-14 season. Panini immediately announced that it was cancelling most of its remaining product calendar for 2012-13, including high-end products like Dominion, Contenders, and Titanium. It is expected that Upper Deck will make a similar announcement in the near future, as it would be inconceivable that, a: the PA would let them do a full 11 releases while Panini did only 6, and b: they would produce a \$500 product like The Cup without the top rookies of the campaign. The announcement by the PA is a double-edged sword: it will, on the one hand, produce the best rookie class in 2013-14 that the hobby has seen since the last lockout produced the epic 2005-06 rookie group; on the other hand, shops which were already struggling will have to endure more months of lean sales due to weakened products, and now fewer of them.

Fans and collectors have had mixed reactions to the announcement of the restrictions placed on 2012-13 rookies. Some are already planning to order a case of 2013-14 Upper Deck Series 1, some will use the relative freedom of the coming



months to fill holes in their player collections, some will look to In The Game for their hobby fix as the company's release schedule is not guided by the NHLPA, and some will throw up their hands and walk away from the hobby. There is heightened anticipation for next year already, as people will be treated to Yakupov, MacKinnon, Drouin, Jones, Galchenyuk, Schroeder, Huberdeau, Gallagher, and many more once the puck drops on the 13-14 season. There are also many disappointed collectors who have chosen some of the rookies from this season's products as new PC projects – there will be some glaring holes in those collections because there likely won't be (pending the checklists for Rookie Anthology) RC's for Chris Kreider or even a guy like Robert Mayer in Crown Royale, Dominion, and depending on what Upper Deck does, Ultimate Collection, SP Authentic, or The Cup. The remaining products for this season will likely continue to rely heavily on new subsets that put the focus on the established stars of the game, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. Speaking from my own perspective, I have paid tremendous attention to SP Game Used this year because for the first time in many years Upper Deck has produced autograph and memorabilia content of Josh Gorges. The inclusion of unique pieces such as net cords and signed aprons from the nets used in the Stanley Cup Finals will also be the points of emphasis for collectors for the coming months. There may be some lean times in the coming months, but there is also the promise of a massive renaissance for the hobby by the time October rolls around.

As we all settle in to watch the sprint to the playoffs, watching our favourite team play 48 games in a condensed 99-day span, hopefully the memory of the lockout will fade away. The lexicon of hockey should be about dirty dekes and dangles, end to end rushes, going top shelf where grandma keeps the cookies, and spectacular displays of leather larceny. The lingo of the lockout will be relegated to the past, to the margins, to the sidelines, and we can all get back to enjoying the greatest game on ice.



**KEEP
CALM
BECAUSE
HOCKEY IS
BACK**



At Last, my Lonely Days Are Over...

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888



It's been a rather long offseason for hockey fans...The Los Angeles Kings won the Stanley Cup on June 11, 2012 and the puck didn't drop again until January 19, 2013. The NHL activities were paralyzed by a 119 days long lockout and as the days went by, the fans grew increasingly tired of waiting for their favorites to hit the ice again.

Thankfully, those days are now behind us and while some fans were quick to say that they would not return to the arenas this year as payback for the lockout they had to endure, the buildings are full of keen fans who were starved for the coolest game on earth. I'll admit that Bettman's declaration that the fans would return to the game no matter what was not his smartest move ever but the bottom line is, I think he was right. I for

one did not even contemplate not returning to the game I love. The day Habs tickets went on sale, I was right there in the virtual waiting room praying to be able to get tickets for the opening game...Alas, as always, the Habs faithful all wanted tickets and I had no such luck...until a friend who has season tickets informed me that he wouldn't be able to attend and asked if I could use his tickets...Jeez...I don't know...Took me all of 0.1 seconds to scream YES!!! And just like that, I had the hottest tickets in town.

Just the excitement at the idea of having the game back meant that I had a wonderful week but it got even better when teams announced how they planned to thank the fans for returning to the game. Like many other teams, the Montreal Canadiens offered 50% in the Habs Zone for a whole week...This meant that on opening night, there were line-ups at every single souvenir outlet at the Bell Centre, everyone wanted a souvenir. Chances are, by pricing everything half off, the teams probably made more money than if they sold the goods full price. In the other notable initiatives to get fans back to the game, the Habs also allowed their fans to come to the arena to watch an intra team game on the Thursday before the season and to the game day practice on Saturday. For both of these events and for the opening night game, every fan in attendance received a free meal (water/soft drink, hot dog and a bag of chips) and a free beer (as long as they were old enough of course).

I wouldn't say that all was therefore forgotten and forgiven but it did help a little...because not everyone is as forgiving as I am with their favorite sport. That being said, on January 19th I had the joy to attend the Habs season opener for the very first time and what a feeling it was. They might have finished dead last in the East last season but there is still something magical about the Canadiens and the opening night ceremonies showed just that... Nos bras meurtris vous tendent le flambeau...à vous de le porter bien haut (From our failing hands we throw you the torch. Be yours to hold it high)...This is more than a saying that is seen in the Habs locker room, this simple sentence carries the glory and the history of the oldest team in the NHL and this was once again highlighted on January 19th...Instead of just introducing the players, the ceremony started when the Bell Centre's lights were nearly all shut down and suddenly, in the upper level a torch appeared carried by no other than Yvan "Roadrunner" Cournoyer who was duly applauded. Then, one level lower, the torch reappeared, this time proudly held by Henri "Pocket Rocket" Richard the whole crowd suddenly lost its



breath being in the presence of hockey royalty of course, he too was showered with applause. Once the crowd (finally quieted down), the torch appeared in the lower bowl and was taking down many stairs by Vincent Damphousse (who was probably the only one on hand who could have done all those stairs as the heroes of the past have all aged). Once Vincent got to ice level, he passed on the torch to Serge “Le Sénateur” Savard to every fan's pleasure and he in turn, passed it on to Jean “Le Gros Bill” Béliveau. If ever there was a legend, this is him...He's always been a favorite of Habs nation and he's had quite a few health scares in the last couple of years so he received a well deserved ovation before passing on the torch to the current Habs captain, Brian Gionta. The American then skated to centre ice and each player was introduced and skated to centre ice to hold the torch.

It was almost like a sacred ritual and it gave the fans the chance to applaud their favorites. Francis Bouillon received a very warm welcome back while Alex Galchenyuk finally understood what it was like to play in Montreal. He was visibly impressed by the cheers that his simple presence provoked and for the fans, it was a great moment to see our newest prospect hold the torch high. The players introduction was wrapped up with the introduction of Carey Price who held it high as well and every fan probably thought “please god let him be able to hold the team like that this year”.

With the ceremonies wrapped up, the game was all set to start and fans got to have a look at (yet another) Price new mask. However, this one had a rather classic look with Habs logos painted on it and as for the front of it, well it showed Price number 31 in the “C” on the chin...just like Patrick Roy's legendary mask...May it bring good fortune to Carey for this year. I won't describe the whole game to you, suffice to say that my beloved Habs lost the game...I will still say that despite the loss, my mood was still riding high as I was just too happy to have the coolest game on earth back.

This being the start of the season, all hopes are allowed and I feel it's the right time to venture a few comments/predictions about nos Canadiens!

Let's start this up with the forwards, now that the Gomezgate is over, there is room for youth and novelty amongst the Canadiens' forwards. I'll go through them on a line to line basis, first off, what was labelled the Habs' first line last year: David Desharnais, Erik Cole and Max Pacioretty. The chemistry was obvious between the three skaters last year, Desharnais and Max Pac already knew each other having played together in Hamilton, as for Cole, well, one could say that he just slipped in like the missing piece of a puzzle. However, one year on, they will have to work harder to accomplish what they did with such ease last year as they will no doubt be under close surveillance from every other team. Couple that with the fact that Cole ruffled some feathers by talking to the press about how he is contemplating retirement and you could have some impatient fans scrutinizing the top line's work. During the first match, the timing seemed to be off for the top line but after such a lengthy break, it was to be expected. Three games in however, things seem to be coming together nicely and Max Pac already has 4 points in the bank.

Next up, the “new” second line: Brian Gionta, Tomas Plekanec and Rene Bourque. While Galchenyuk started the year on the wing instead of Bourque, he was moved to the third line about halfway through the game to make room for Bourque who seems to be thriving under Michel Therrien's orders. It is rather refreshing to see how these three have



been inking up thus far. This is a line with plenty of speed and skill and a few of their goals were amazing to see. It is still early in the season but Therrien might just finally have found a way to provide good linemates for the poor Plekanec who seemed to be somewhat friendless last year. If Bourque can keep this up, he will soon become a fan favorite in Montreal.



Let's have a look at the third line now: Alex Galchenyuk, Brandon Prust and Brendan Gallagher. While I was puzzled to see Gally move to the third line halfway through the opening game, I must admit that Therrien was dead on when he decided to bring Gallagher in to replace Lars Eller who had provided a lackluster effort on January 19th. And what better way to provide support for the two rookies than to assign them (in the words of a Gallagher) a babysitter? Yes, the gritty Prust turned out to be the perfect complement for this line. He brings energy, determination and toughness to the table and even set-up Galchenyuk's first NHL goal. Montreal is not known to bring

youngsters in the league but they might just stick with these two this year. Galchenyuk is still eligible to play with his junior club but it's hard to see how Bergevin could decide to send him back to the Sting...Needless to say that the fans are already really excited about last year's first pick and they all want to see him and see him now...

As for the fourth line, it currently includes Ryan White, Travis Moen and Colby Armstrong. This is clearly not a line to witch the Habs will turn for offensive production but it can surely bring toughness, commitment and a complete effort night after night. Things have gone well so far, aside from the fact that White cannot seem to stay away from the penalty box...I cannot see Therrien giving him too much of a long leash on that front, he likes toughness but not silliness.

In the heights of the Bell Centre since the second game, Lars Eller watches his teammates and can only wonder when/if he will be given another chance to prove himself. When he was scratched, the Habs' head coach justified his decision by say: "Pas de niaisage" in other words; there's no time to waste this year. It seems that to play under Therrien, you have to give it all for the team and if you don't, you can't expect to stay on the ice.

As for the defense corps, I'm happy to report that they are coping perfectly well in P.K. Subban's absence. As you know, and as will be further discussed in another article, the young stallion is holding out, he's still not with the team because of contract issue. He says that he wants to be paid what he is worth but he might live to regret his behavior if the Canadiens cope well in his absence and other D-men step up and seize this opportunity. So far, Raphael Diaz has done wonders...As I am writing this, he is currently at the top of the points leaders list for the defensemen. The Swiss currently plays on the first power play unit alongside with Andrei Markov and the two have already established an impressive chemistry. In the meantime, Emelin is tallying up hits at an impressive speed with 18 just 3 games in while



Josh Gorges is as reliable as ever defensively and ever contributed a goal. As for Francis Bouillon, the Habs fans are most pleased to have the little bulldog back and he is as tenacious as he was in our souvenirs. More often than not, he is paired up with Tomas Kaberle and has to fix quite a few of his mistakes but so far, so good. Speaking of Kaberle, when/if Subban signs his contract, I believe that Kaberle will be joining Yannick Weber and Lars Eller as healthy scratches. I know, he is paid a lot of money but if there is one thing we now know about the new Habs, it's that they prefer to pay people to do nothing than to be an issue around the team (see Gomez, Scott).

In goal, well, there is not much to report, Price will see the bulk of the action and the Habs will manage to go as far as he will take them...I sure hope that is far! Call me crazy but so far, the season has given me reasons to hope that the Canadiens might just make it to the Spring dance!

And just as I finished writing this article, the Habs announced that Max Pacioretty would miss 3 to 4 weeks due to having his appendix removed...Here comes Lars Eller's chance, I hope for him that he grabs it with both hands. So early in the season, a big test is already at the Habs' door...

I hope you've enjoyed watching your favorite team as much as I have enjoyed watching mine and may the best outfit win! Have a brilliant season everyone and let's all watch Hockey Night in Canada like in the good old days!





A Monotonous Tone to an Exciting Season A Look at my Eastern Conference Predictions By Cole Feinbloom aka cfagent0

This year's shortened NHL season is going to prove to be a monotonous challenge, so to speak. Fans, although ecstatic that hockey is back, are more than likely not too excited about the schedule. Not facing off against out-of-conference opponents, playing against teams twice in a row, and what seems like an ultra-repetitive schedule in general might make fans shy away from the sport a bit. But for those dedicated fans who stuck with the league through the lockout, and look to stay dedicated to their team throughout the season, this article is for you. I will break down my bold predications for this years playoffs, and give you my surprise picks as to who might end up with the cup. So, without further ado, here are my predictions for the Eastern Conference.

8. Toronto Maple Leafs

Some may be questioning my pick in including the Maple Leafs, considering the recent struggles, such as lack of a definitive goaltender, as well as poor leadership, but with some bold offseason moves, they look to make an impact as a strong contender. In my opinion, contrary to popular belief, I like Reimer in net and think he has some serious potential. Plus, adding James Van Riemsdyk is going to give a boost to the offense that already had Kessel and young talent in Orr and Kulemin. Bottom line, the Leafs made some progress, and although not yet a top contender, they have a shot at a playoff spot this year.



7. Tampa Bay Lightning

It seems that every year, the Lightning threaten to make a run deep into the playoffs, but aside from Stamkos, lack of depth holds them back. Sure, they have veterans in Lecavalier and St. Louis, but their production has significantly decreased as they aged. The Lightning have a strong team, but I believe their age and depth might hold them back a bit. For now, I think a seventh seed is fitting until some changes are made.

6. Buffalo Sabres

With an off year this past season, the Sabres look to rebound. Ryan Miller, still, is one of the league's top goalies, and the addition of Steve Ott brings some of the strength they were lacking. A young roster will help them through this season, furthermore veterans like Vanek, Leino, and company will guide them this season, and maybe even take them on a playoff run.

5. Philadelphia Flyers

The Flyers consistently have a strong roster, and it appears that this year is no different. One look at their roster, and you immediately think they are one of the top contenders, but underlying problems could hold them back. Their offense, on one hand, has more depth than the Los Angeles Clippers bench it seems, and could lead to being the league's top scoring



team. On the other hand, their defense seems to have some flaws, and in the net, Bryzgalov is no guarantee, and until he consistently proves he is able to compete straight through a season, I don't think they will be seeing the cup.

4. Washington Capitals

Are they old? Yes. That is probably the only fault on this year's Washington roster. As always, the Caps are proving to be one of the strongest teams in the NHL, and for good reasons. Carlson and Greene on defense; it is solid. Adding Ribeiro as another threat on offense; it's oh so smart. Oh, and let us not forget about that new guy, Ovechkin. Something tells me that he is going to become somebody. Holtby in net is at times a question mark, but for the most part, he is a solid net minder and maturing with every game he plays. Washington, this year, is a Stanley Cup contender for sure.

3. New York Rangers

For most, the New York Rangers are the top team this year in the Eastern Conference. I have them down at three for a few reasons. Yes, the acquisition of Nash will greatly benefit their offensive production, Gaborik will have another MVP worthy season, and Lundquist is still one of the league's top if not the top goaltender, but there are a few kinks still to be worked out. With such a short training camp, Rick Nash will have a tough time getting acquainted with Tortorella's offense, and some of the third and fourth liners will still struggle offensively. Even with a few issues, the Rangers head into the season looking tough.



2. Pittsburgh Penguins

Take Sidney Crosby. Now, add Evgeni Malkin. Put them together and you get one of the best offensive duos the league has ever seen. James Neal; sure, throw him into that equation as well. Now, add in everyone else listed as a winger or center on their roster and you get one, crazy talented hockey team. Now, move onto the defensive side. Brooks Orpik, Kris Letang, most notably, provide a solid back line in support of the outstanding offense. And as was the case in the past few years, you have Fleury in net. The Pittsburgh Penguins are in position to grab a top spot, and they are here to stay.

1. Boston Bruins

Finally, my pick to be the number 1 seed, is the Boston Bruins. I know, they don't have Tim Thomas in the crease, but Tuukka Rask can definitely hold his own. Most of the past years team is returning and let us not forgot Tyler Seguin, the young gun who has the talent to become a MVP candidate. The only concern for the Bruins this year is injuries, but if they manage to stay healthy throughout the shortened season, Boston is poised to make a run at Lord Stanley's Cup.



Ray Lewis Takes Many Others on His 'Last Ride'

By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert



Much of the talk of Super Bowl 47 has surrounded Ray Lewis and his "Last Ride." Lewis, one of the all-time great linebackers, elected to 13 Pro Bowls and 7 All-Pro 1st Teams, has been a fantastic comeback story this season. He has led his team in tackles in all three playoff games, and led the world in both emotional speeches and God references before, during, and after games. Looking beyond Lewis, however, you will see many other great players and story lines that are part of the season's biggest game.

The other most talked about headline has to be that of the Harbaugh brothers, former Pro Bowl QB Jim, Head Coach of the 49ers, and older brother John, Head Coach of the Ravens. It's one thing to be football's first set of

brothers to make it as head coaches. To have had the success that the Harbaugh boys have had, that's an entirely different animal altogether. If all Cris Carter did was catch touchdowns, all the Harbaugh brothers do is win games.

John is the only coach in NFL history to win a playoff game in each of his first five seasons (nobody else has done it more than 3 times). He has 3 Division championships to go with this year's Conference championship. All this from a man who's first head coaching gig is the one he currently holds!

Little brother Jim honed his craft leading men on the field during a solid 14-year career as a QB, throwing for over 26,000 yards and 126 TDs, including one year for the Ravens, who he will face in the Super Bowl. He became head coach of the Niners after guiding both the U. of San Diego and Stanford. He has just two years of NFL head coaching experience, but has won Division titles both years, and this year's Conference title. Combined, that's 7 years, 7 playoff appearances, 5 Division titles, and 2 Conference titles. Not too shabby.

Lining their sidelines, Baltimore has plenty of great stories as they head to their first Super Bowl since their victory in 2000. Ed Reed will undoubtedly go down as one of the best defensive backs to lace up cleats, but he has gone his entire remarkable career without winning the big one. Reed has 9 Pro Bowls, 5 appearances on the All Pro 1st team, and the 2004 NFL Defensive POY trophy on his mantle, but no Super Bowl ring. Even at this stage of his career, Reed has about as much big play potential as anyone on the field, owning the two longest interception returns in NFL history, on his way to owning the all-time record for most interception return yards.

Staying on the defensive side of the ball, DE/LB Terrell Suggs is also looking for his first ring. With Ray Lewis, Ed Reed, and Suggs all on the field, incredibly, the Ravens will have their franchise's all-time leader in tackles (Lewis, 1573, over 1000 ahead of the closest Raven), interceptions (Reed, 61, 10th all-time), and sacks (Suggs, 84.5) all taking



the field in Super Bowl 47. How rare is that? Add Haloti Ngata, the 4-time Pro Bowler, to the defense, and the Niners and their young QB seem to have their hands full.

Also on the defensive end is Brendon Ayanbadejo, a linebacker who has a rather unique tie to the Ravens' championship team in 2000. Brendon's brother, Obafemi, was a RB on the 2000 team, 6th on the team in catches. Can little brother Brendon follow in his brother's footsteps?

On the offensive side of the ball, Joe Flacco leads the Ravens' attack. While the Ravens don't have a rich QB history, Flacco leads the Ravens all-time by a rather large margin in wins, completions, yards, and TD passes. Can the franchise's best QB lead them to victory?

He will definitely have some choice receivers to throw to. Anquan Boldin will be playing in his second Super Bowl, losing in 2008 while with the Arizona Cardinals. He showed up to play, catching 8 balls for 84 yards. The Ravens' third leading pass catcher may surprise you, as he is also the franchise's second leading rusher. Ray Rice has combined for over 5,500 rushing yards, 300 catches, and 39 TDs, with two seasons of over 2,000 yards from scrimmage. Opening holes for Rice has been the league's best fullback, Vonta Leach. Leach has been named to the Pro Bowl and a 1st Team All-Pro for the last 3 years.

Matt Birk, a 14-year veteran, will be a part of the offensive line looking to both protect Flacco and open holes for Rice. Birk has an interesting connection to the opposition. Birk was a rookie on the 1998 Vikings, a team that was supposed to roll to the title after a 15-1 regular season. More on another player on that team later. Also experiencing a career resurgence is 11-year veteran OL Bryant McKinnie. Perhaps he could cap a solid career with a win in the big game. From the opposite coast, the San Francisco 49ers have just as many compelling stories.

First, don't worry Niners fans. There will be no muffed returns by Kyle Williams to cost you the game this year, as he is currently on IR.



One player who is definitely not on IR is QB Colin Kaepernick. Despite leading his team to the Super Bowl, he doesn't even lead his team in wins, TD passes, completions, or passer rating this season.

The franchise leader in rushing yards is 8-year veteran Frank Gore. Frank has topped 1,000 yards in six seasons, and has been named to the Pro Bowl four times. Among the great tight ends in SF history, Vernon Davis is slowly working his way up the list. Since ex-coach Mike Singletary famously sent him off the field, Vernon has worked on his game, and his maturity. He has accounted for 31 TDs over the last four seasons, all without missing a single game.

The one player on San Fran who can really cement his legacy with a win in the Super Bowl has to be WR Randy Moss. His stats are almost unique: 9th all-time in grabs, 3rd in yards, and second to only Jerry Rice in TD catches. After losing



the 2007 Super Bowl with New England, Moss's career seemed to be spiraling out of control. He was out of New England less than three seasons later, went back to Minnesota for a handful of games, cut there, picked up by Tennessee for a few games, cut there, and was out of football completely in 2011. Moss decided to turn it around in 2012, acting as a mentor for budding star Michael Crabtree, Mario Manningham, and Davis. Moss still finished T-4th on the team with 28 grabs, and hauled in 3 more TDs. Will it be Moss or former teammate Birk who takes home the hardware?

Just as Baltimore has been built on defense, you can almost consider SF to be "Baltimore West." The Niners feature one of the game's premier LB's in Patrick Willis. Willis is now a 5-time 1st Team All Pro. The "Smith Brothers" anchor D-line. Despite playing just two seasons, and starting just 16 games in his career, Aldon Smith already has 33.5 sacks, good for 6th in franchise history. Sitting right behind Aldon on the Niners all-time list is Justin Smith, the 12-year veteran with over 75 sacks in his career. Keeping those two away from Flacco has to be the Ravens top priority. On the special teams side of the ball, no player on the Niners side has played in more career games than kicker David Akers. While he has struggled this season, the savvy veteran will be playing in his second Super Bowl, looking to win for the first time. The Niners also boast one of the best punters in the game in 9-year vet and 3-time 1st Team All Pro Andy Lee.

While, for me, there are no Boise State connections, there are players from every conference and division in the NCAA. Players born in the 70's, 80's, and 90's are all participating. From every part of the nation, there is someone or something to root for in Super Bowl 47.





Basketball Happenings By Jay Weger aka Jay520

Contests & Winners

At the end of January k_northrup and pwaldo are tied with 10 wins each in 1st place for the GUess the Score contests for reGULAR members. BayAreaJavy is 2nd with 9 wins while gladdyontherise, phillyteamhater and udeckcoll are in a tie for 3rd with 6 wins each. On the VIP side gladdyontherise leads with 12 wins followed by pwaldo with 11, DunkingDurant35 with 10, mikepro44 with 9, NY Sports Teams 8 and 70sbestcardboard and delones24 are tied with 7 wins. Thrillseeker and tjvisco tied with 29 points for 1st place in the December NBA Top Performers contest getting 50 cc. rocketfan86 and toddsr tied for 2nd with 28 points getting 25 cc and 3rd was Christianfriend coming in 3rd to earn spots in the playoffs later in the year. So far through Jan. 28th missnesmith has 34 points, Thrillseeker has 31 points, tjvisco has 28 points, BigBaller23 - 27 points and toddsr 25 points. Look for the NBA All-Star Contest in the contests forum in February. Your chance to try to predict who will win the Dunk Contest, 3-Point Shoot Out and have the fastest time in the other contests held at All-Star weekend.

Hobby News

In December 12-13 Prizm was starting to heat up with everyone wanting the Green and Gold Prizm refractors. Golds are numbered to 10 while the Greens are retail only and not numbered but still sought after. Some of the Gold refractors were going for \$500-\$800 for Kobe and LeBron while rookies Kyrie Irving, Anthony Davis and Damian Lillard were selling for \$300-\$500. Since then they are the hottest cards on eBay with Kobe base Gold numbered to 10 now going for \$1000 to \$3,499 (9.5 graded), USA \$799 - \$1999, MVP \$1,326- \$1950. LeBron's Golds are also rising to the level of Kobe and beyond as are many of the rookies. Kyrie Irving gold is selling for \$3500 to even \$10,000 with Anthony Davis and Damian Lillard a couple thousand less. If you are looking to purchase some of the other stars you will be shelling out around \$200 - \$400 for them. The Green are being bought at nice prices as well Kobe and LeBron going for \$80 to nearly \$300 and rookie Irving \$150 - \$400. Then you have the regular Prizms that are selling in the same price range with the Prizm refractor autos numbered to 25 double and even triple those prices.

Panini announced 1 new product and 2 from last year will be hitting the shelves in the coming months. 1st is Panini Gold Standard which will comprise 10 cards per box and retail at around \$200 in late April. Each box will have 4 autos and 1 GU along with 1 metal card. A massive 305 card base set with 2 parallels Black and Platinum, Gold Strike Signatures of rc's and young stars, Mother Lode auto set of the biggest stars, with Solid Gold 14kt gold one of ones, the Bullion Brand memorabilia cards featuring oversized pieces of game-worn jersey tags and the Black Gold Threads oversized memorabilia cards.

Due out in May is Past & Present. Box correlation and prices were not given but expect around a \$100 for a box with 3 autos. 250 card base set that includes 50 short-printed variations and, for the first time ever, true Rookie Cards. P&P returns with Raining 3's and new inserts of Treads (giving the look and feel of sneaker treads). Winning Touch



Banners and the felt-textured Headbands is new along with the cereal-box-inspired Rise 'n Shine insert is sure to be a big hit, too.

New is Panini Marquee that will have a 20-pack box (eight cards per pack) and deliver three autos. A 150-card base set, 35 rookie cards with five unique rookie subsets each incorporating vastly different technologies. Marquee is bolstered by five autograph inserts (including a 25-card coaches insert) and five uniquely designed inserts. Rookie Signatures, Stars of the Night, Slam Dunk Legends, Champions and Election Night Autographs are inserts and auto sets with interesting new technology.

Milestone Collections

A nice and hard set was completed in December by BruceS. The set in question is one of the 1st serial numbered parallels in basketball 96-97 Showcase Legacy Collection /150 for each row. This set has stars such as MJ, Shaq and Pippen from the mid 90s with rookies that year of Kobe and Iverson. I got in touch with BruceS (Tobias) to ask him a few questions. Check out the cards in this link:

<http://www.sportscardforum.com/threads/1853248-96-97-Flair-Showcase-Legacy-Collection-set-finally-completed!>

When and why did you start the search for the set?

I started the set in December 2007. The reasons why I started this set were: 1. I wanted to collect a set, that wasn't that easy to put together, but it had to be a set that I really liked 2. I remembered going to local Card Shops and busting some Flair Showcase packs back in the days and I loved these Cards from the start. I thought the design and the 3 different themes were just amazing. 3. The Legacy collection cards were the first serial numbered cards in the hobby 4. Back when I started it seemed quite affordable and had a great player selection.

What was the hardest card to track down?

The hardest card to track down was actually the last card, the Reggie Miller Row 2, from the second last card to the last it took me almost a year. I once lost an auction on eBay half a year ago on it. A very nice guy got it for me, he was actually looking for a legacy collection card himself and contacted me, because he lost the auction for the card he needed against me a while ago. I told him that I can't give him the card because I needed it for my set, but asked him if he knew someone who has a Miller Row 2 and I was lucky. He knew someone. The funny thing was that at the same time, another one popped up on eBay.

What was the most you paid for a card while trying to complete the set?

The most I paid for a Card was 1400\$ for the Michael Jordan Row 2 Card, I bought it when the 90s hype had already started. Luckily I was able to get most of them before, here are some examples on the Kobes and Jordans: Kobe Row 2 600 \$, Row 1 600 \$, Row 0 800 \$, Jordan Row 1 500 \$, Row 0 600 \$.

What is your favorite card in the collection?

My favorite card is the Scottie Pippen Row 0 Legacy. I love this card and it was the second Legacy card I got back in the days in 1997. Now I have 3 copies of it and every time I look at it I get some kind of goose bumps because it brings back so many Souvenirs of the late 90s.



Which of the Row 2-0 do you like best and why?

The Row 0 I like most, they just look amazing, for me personally, they are one of the best designed cards ever (this is why I wanted to collect them).

Were there any road blocks in obtaining a few of the cards?

Yeah there were quite some challenges, you know not everyone who has a Legacy card I need wants to give it away, but in most of the cases I got great support from a lot of different people from all forums all over the world. The cards came from Germany, Taiwan, Australia, Hawaii, USA, France, Poland, China, Canada, hope I didn't forget anyone.

Approximately how much have you spent completing the set?

For the entire set I spent maybe around 10-12k \$.

Was it worth it to complete the set?

Yes of course it was worth it, you know in the beginning I started with two Cards, I once pulled the Juwan Howard Row 0 Legacy in the shop back in 1997, and bought a Pippen Legacy row 0 because I collected Pippen back in the days. You can imagine when you start with 2 out of 270 cards, you have a long way to go. I didn't want to pressure myself but I can tell you that I got more and more exited the less cards I needed. I also finished the base set whilst collecting the Legacy cards. Now I'm considering (actually wanted to get a bit out of the hobby), to finish the master set, with the Class of 96 cards and the hot shots, we'll see , maybe.

Would you do it all over again?

Yes of course I would do it again if I were back in 2007.

What is a tip to collectors trying to track down low numbered sets as huge as yours?

You could also start it today, if you have the money or patience to do it, I think it would still be possible. But for me I wouldn't have started it today after the 90s hype. Some cards just don't show up very often anymore. All I can say to collectors who want to collect a huge set like this is to be patient and not to quit even if you don't get a card you need for months. You should just relax and everything will be fine.

When finding the cards either on eBay or on the forums was condition an issue since so many are valuable?

Of course condition was an issue, if I pay a certain price, the card also has to be in a excellent condition. Some Legacy cards have horizontal stripes and color changes, these cards I didn't take. But it didn't have to be a graded card, I'm not that much into grading, knowing that it is often not objective and some kind of business... I prefer trusting my eyes and feeling.

Box Breaks

In the last 2 months there has be a multitude of breaks but no more than Panini Prizm. Neilnjar got 2 boxes getting RC autos of Kyrie Irving and Anthony Davis.nolafan33 got a box to hit an Anthony Davis rc auto. IamRalpho opened 2 boxes to pull RC of Kyrie Irving and Kawhi Leonard, RC autos Tyler Honeycutt Prizm ref. /25 and Kyrie



Irving. PMaravich44 opened just 7 packs to hit a Kevin Durant auto. duke74 got 1 box and a couple of packs to hit a RC auto of Michael Kidd-Gilchrest and a nice Prizm ref. auto of Tyler Zeller /25. dirtywax got a box to get a Prizm ref. auto of Jonas Valanciunas /25. 44 Magnum bought a box to get RC auto of Bradley Beal and Prizm refractors of Kobe and LeBron James USA. almostkinda got 1 box and 8 packs to pull RC of Damian Lillard and Dion Waiters and Prizm refractors of RC Damian Lillard, Klay Thompson and Anthony Davis USA. ronfir opened 2.5 boxes to get RC auto of Jimmer Fredette and Allan Houston Prizm ref. auto /25. JaMarchand2012 opened 2 boxes to pull Prizm refractors of rc Damian Lillard and Kemba Walker, Prizm ref. autos of rc Iman Shumpert/25 and Kobe Bryant/25. jprrt80 opened 33 retail packs to get rc of Davis, Lillard and Green ref. of Dwight Howard and James Harden. dsabre1980 got 60 retail packs to get RC of Irving, Lillard, 2 Derrick Williams and 3 Austin Rivers, Green Prizm ref. of Harden DTB, John Wall. Golden Shaub bought 4 boxes to pull RC of Davis, Damian Lillard, Kyrie Irving, RC auto of Jimmer Fredette, Prizm refractor of LeBron USA, Green Prizm ref. rc Kemba Walker, Kobe DTB and LeBron USA.

bigp621 opened 4 boxes to hit RC auto of Dion Waiters, Prizm ref auto of Clyde Lovelette/25 and 3 Gold Prizm refractors of Manu Ginobili/10, Kris Joseph/10 and David Robinson/10. fballJets got box to pull rc of Irving, Waiters, Prizm ref. of rc Waiters and a Gold Prizm ref. of Jon Leuer/10. deeluxe got 2 boxes to pull rc of Davis and Lillard, Prizm refractors of rc Harrison Barnes, Kobe Finalists, Gold Prizm ref. of Kris Joseph and Doron Lamb/10. Qwaisan got a box to pull RC auto of Tyler Henson and a Gold Prizm ref. Rodney Stuckey /10. nlau588 opened 2 packs to find rc of Lillard and a Gold Prizm ref. of rc Chandler Parsons/10. gottagitdemjs opened 2 boxes to pull RC auto of MarShon Brooks and a Gold Prizm ref. of LaMarcus Aldridge/10. funone39 opened 4 boxes to pull Prizm Ref. of Stephen Curry, RC autos of Terrence Jones, Iman Shumpert, Prizm ref. auto of rc Kyrie Irving/25, Gold Prizm ref. of Hakeem Olajuwon and Kevin Garnett MVP both /10. J Hey Kid 22 opened a box to hit rc of Irving, Kidd-Gilchrest and Beal and Gold Prizm ref. Hakeem Olajuwon Finalists/10. Dlhdaman opened a box to hit a Gold Prizm ref. of Scottie Pippen Finalists/10. Najera86 busted a box to pull Prizm ref auto rc of Andrew Goudelock/25 and a Gold prizm ref. of Larry Bird MVP/10. tjvisco got a box to pull rc of Lillard and Waiters and Gold Prizm ref. LeBron James Finalists/10. jrussell13 opened 2.5 boxes to pull rc of Davis, Irving and Lillard, RC auto of Jimmer Fredette, Prizm ref. of rc Dion Waiters, Green ref. of Rodman and Gold Prizm ref. of Kobe Bryant/10.

2 other boxes to get opened were Absolute Memorabilia and Totally Certified. palantri got a box of Certified to hit a rc Tristan Thompson Totally Blue 3clr patch /25. deeluxe opened a box to hit a rc Brandon Knight Totally Blue patch /25. anjoot got a box to hit a RC auto of Austin Rivers/49 and a sick rc Festus Ezeli Black 1/1. McPUG opened a box to get a Totally Signatures Silver Luol Deng/25 and a sweet Brandon Knight Emerald 4/5. dirtywax opened 2 boxes of certified to hit a red patch of Patrick Ewing/49, Gold rc Kemba Walker and a Totally Signatures Emerald Mark Jackson 3/5. jprrt80 opened 2 boxes to hit Gold of Courtney Lee, Karl Malone Blue 4 clr patch/25, Red auto rc of Anthony Davis/79, Blue auto Jeff Teague/15 and a Brook Lopez Totally Signatures Silver/25. ccblec got a box to hit a Chris Mullin auto 2/10. ronfir opened 4 packs of Absolute to get Marks of Fame auto of Gary Payton, RC auto of Doron Lamb and a Tools of the Trade Danny Granger patch 10/25. theGuru got 6 boxes of Certified to hit Blue parallels /299 of rc Kemba Walker and Kyrie Irving, Gold parallels /25 of rc Terrence Ross, Al Harrington and Matt Bonner, Red patch of rc Kemba Walker/49, Blue patch of Joel Anthony/25, RC auto of Brandon Knight Blue/49, Totally Signatures Blue Bill Laimbeer /15 and a sick Black 2 clr patch of Jalen Rose 1/1. pietroskim got a case of Certified to get Gold base /25 of Johan Petro, Nick Collison and DeMarcus Cousins, Emerald base /5 of Brandon Rush and Black Marquis TeaGue rc 1/1, Blue patch Taj Gibson/25, Gold patches /10 of Tyler Hansbrough, Caron Butler and Shaq, Emerald patch of Luis



Scola 2/5, RC autos of Derrick Williams, Tyler Zeller Blue/49, Tyler Honeycutt Gold/25, Kyrie Irving Silver redemption, Totally Signatures Silver Chris Bosh/25, Totally Signatures Gold Jrue Holiday 10/10.

NBA News

Here is the NBA Standings & Statistics through 1/27

Eastern Conference

1. Miami 28 - 13
2. New York 27 - 15
3. Chicago 26 - 17
4. Brooklyn 26 - 18
5. Indiana 26 - 18
6. Atlanta 25 - 19
7. Milwaukee 23 - 19
8. Boston 21 - 23

Western Conference

1. San Antonio 36 - 11
2. OKC 34 - 11
3. L. A. Clippers 33 - 13
4. Memphis 28 - 15
5. Golden State 26 - 17
6. Denver 27 - 18
7. Utah 20 - 24
8. Houston 24 - 22

Scoring

1. Durant 29.6
2. Anthony 29.4
3. Bryant 28.7
4. James 26.6
5. Harden 26.0

Rebounds

1. Howard 12.0
2. Randolph 11.6
3. Vucevic 11.3
4. Noah 11.1
5. Asik 11.0



Assists

1. Rondo - 11.1
2. Paul - 9.7
3. Vasquez - 9.2
4. Holiday - 8.9
5. Westbrook - 8.4

NBA All-Star Teams

East Starters

- F – Kevin Garnett – Boston Celtics
- F – LeBron James – Miami Heat
- F – Carmelo Anthony – Knicks
- G – Dwyane Wade – Miami Heat
- G – Rajon Rondo – Boston Celtics

Reserves

- C - Joakim Noah – Chicago Bulls
- F – Luol Deng – Chicago Bulls
- G – Kyrie Irving – Cleveland Cavaliers
- C – Tyson Chandler – New York Knicks
- F – Chris Bosh – Miami Heat
- F – Paul George – Indiana Pacers
- G – Jrue Holiday – Philadelphia 76ers

West Starters

- C – Dwight Howard – L. A. Lakers
- F – Blake Griffin – L. A. Clippers
- F – Kevin Durant – OKC Thunder
- G – Kobe Bryant – L. A. Lakers
- G – Chris Paul – L. A. Clippers

Reserves

- C – Tim Duncan – San Antonio Spurs
- G – Tony Parker – San Antonio Spurs
- G – James Harden – Houston Rockets
- G – Russell Westbrook – OKC Thunder
- F – David Lee – Golden State Warriors
- F – LaMarcus Aldridge – Blazers
- F – Zach Randolph – Memphis Grizzlies



NBA Lockout and how it affected the Sport & Hobby

The Lockout in the NBA last season didn't really affect the sport too much as fans seemed to come back in droves to see their favorite players and teams. Some of the key players stuck it out playing in charity and sponsored pick-up games while others decided to go play for teams in Europe and China. Most that went overseas to play had return clause to the NBA once the lockout ended except for those who went to China.

The hobby suffered a little due to no NBA licensed cards being produced till around March last year. Panini only put out 5 products for the shortened season with no rookies from the season to get. They sold the collectors on autograph redemptions for 11-12 rookies and redemptions for 12-13 rookies. And to appease the collectors for this year we are treated to a double rookie class in all the Panini products. Also while the lockout was going on and the lack of NBA licensed cards collectors jumped on the chance to pick up late 90s inserts of MJ and Kobe driving the rest of the inserts up in price. All the tough to pull inserts and low numbered parallels became interesting again which led to Upper Deck making Fleer Retro to try to capitalize on the trend. So in the long run the lockout helped and hurt some in the hobby by making collectors go back to the old stuff and making them relevant and spurring Panini to come up with new stuff collectors want to buy.





P.K. Subban and His Future in Montreal

By Richard McAdam aka RGM81



The face of the Canadiens? While the Habs have begun their 2012-13 season, P.K. Subban still awaits a new contract.

Throughout the summer of 2012, Montreal Canadiens fans waited with nervous anticipation for the announcement that the team had re-signed its star blueliner, P.K. Subban. With only a limited window of opportunity before a presumed lockout, other NHL clubs were racing to lock up their key on-ice personnel for as long as possible while the rules still permitted long-term back-diving contracts. Though it was a long-running staple of the Canadiens' philosophy to avoid those types of larger deals for players just coming off their entry-level contracts, with the new regime under Marc Bergevin in place, many thought and hoped that he would break out of that mould for a special player like Subban. But as the clock ticked down to September 15th, word started to emerge that the two sides were on very different philosophical wavelengths, and thus no contract was signed before the lockout began. Many hoped that a deal would come in time for Subban to start the season with Montreal, but that did not happen, and with each passing day things sound more and more negative in the media.

There has been growing concern among many Canadiens fans that Subban will end up being traded out of town because of the inability of Bergevin and Don Meehan (Subban's agent) to bridge the gap in terms of term and dollars. It's not the desired outcome of either side. Both the organization and the player agree that P.K. Subban should be a member of the Canadiens for a long time. How the dollars get assigned, and over what course of time those dollars get assigned, has proven to be an intractable issue in the short run. It is my contention that Subban will ultimately get re-signed with Montreal in time to play the majority of this lockout-shortened 2013 season, but the discussion that follows is the path that has to be navigated to arrive at that final destination.



Montreal's Organizational Philosophy



This negotiation is GM Marc Bergevin's first big test in Montreal

As previously stated, the Montreal Canadiens have tended to be conservative when it comes to awarding players term and dollars when coming off of their entry-level contracts. Recent history is replete with examples of this organizational culture: Carey Price, Tomas Plekanec, and Max Pacioretty are the three key players to look at for guidance as to how Bergevin is approaching these negotiations. These three represent core pieces of the Canadiens, and all of them have gone through a similar process to what Subban is experiencing now. Let's look at the contract history of these players in chronological order, beginning with Plekanec.

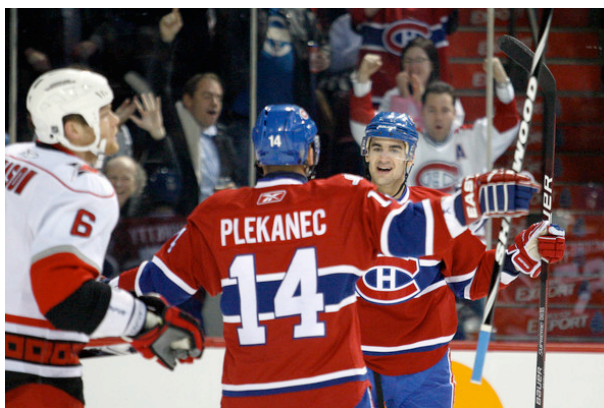
Coming off his entry level deal, Plekanec actually went through two more contracts during his restricted free agent years: he signed a 2-year deal that covered the 2007-08 and 2008-09 seasons with a modest cap hit of just \$1.8M before signing a one-year contract with a \$2.75M deal for the 2009-10 season. It wasn't until the 2007-08 campaign that Plekanec had firmly established himself as one of the Canadiens top centres, a dynamic two-way player that could be used in any situation. He was a major piece of the Canadiens finishing 1st in the East in 07-08, playing on a line with Alex Kovalev and Andrei Kostitsyn where he put up 69 points and was a +15. He regressed somewhat in 2008-09, but bounced back with a career year in 2009-10, scoring 70 points and earning a big contract just as he entered unrestricted free agent status. The Canadiens awarded Plekanec with a 6-year, \$30M contract, which is still the richest of any forward on the team. Plekanec was a bargain player for his RFA years, and though the Canadiens recognized his contributions on the ice he still had to go through the process of negotiating short-term deals for a median value before cashing in with the big deal.

Carey Price was a star for the Canadiens from the moment he took his first steps on the ice at the Bell Centre. He had everything that the organization could ask for in a hockey player: immense talent, good looks, a calm demeanour, and a willingness to work hard to be the best. He is far and away the most popular Canadiens player on the roster, and his merchandise is everywhere in Montreal and across Canada. He has become a brand. But even Price was not immune to



the Canadiens system of second contracts. Circumstances involving the goaltender position in Montreal dictated that as much as anything, with Price having been relegated to the backup role for most of the 2009-10 season as Jaroslav Halak became an instant playoff hero due to his spectacular play that carried the Habs to the Eastern Conference Final for the first time since 1993. Both Price and Halak were coming off their entry level deals simultaneously, and it appeared evident that the Canadiens would not or could not retain both.

Once the decision was made to trade Halak to St. Louis, it firmly established that Price would be the Canadiens #1 goalie. But there had been questions about Price and whether he could be “the man” in Montreal over the long haul. As such, the contract talks between the Canadiens and Price’s agent dragged on until September, which angered many Habs fans who would have preferred that Halak had been retained. Price had stated all along that he wanted to play his whole career in Montreal, and that the length of the negotiations was because he wanted a long-term contract. The Canadiens stuck to their mantra, however, and ultimately Price would sign a 2-year contract for \$5.5M. Meanwhile, in St. Louis Halak had signed a 4-year deal for \$15M, a reflection of the Blues’ greater organizational leeway in awarding contracts. Price would go on to have a career year in 2010-11 that gave fans, media, and the club full confidence that the Canadiens had chosen wisely, and in the summer of 2012 he signed a 6-year \$39M contract that will guarantee he stays with the team until 2018.



Max Pacioretty and Tomas Plekanec are two prime examples of how the Canadiens have handled players coming off their entry-level contracts.

Max Pacioretty is the latest player to have to go through the Canadiens system. Having debuted in the 2008-09 season, he spent much of his first three years bouncing between Montreal and Hamilton, only firmly establishing himself as a full-time NHL’er in the 2010-11 season. He was enjoying a solid campaign when the infamous Zdeno Chara incident happened on March 8th, ending Pacioretty’s season after just 37 games, in which time Pacioretty had scored 14 goals and added 10 assists. The organization stood behind their young player, helping his rehabilitation every step of the way and ensuring that once he was healthy he would have a place with the big club. He was re-signed in June, still during his rehab process, to a 2-year deal with a \$1.625M cap hit. With so many questions about his long-term health, it was the prudent move in any circumstance, but nonetheless followed the organization’s pattern of a short-term bridge that could pay off big time for the player in future years. Pacioretty answered any questions about his ability to recuperate and regain his old form, as he had a stellar 2011-12 season, scoring 33 goals and totalling 65 points. New general manager Bergevin was so impressed that he quickly signed Pacioretty to a long-term contract extension that takes effect in 2013-14, which will run for 6 years at \$4.5M per season.



There is therefore a well-established pattern in the Montreal organization when it comes to handling their young players, one which some feel it is presumptuous and even arrogant for Subban to feel that he should not have to go through that process. Plekanec, Price, and Pacioretty all had questions coming off their entry-level contracts, and those have surely been answered as evidenced by the long-term rewards they all received after their second deals had concluded. Are there still questions about Subban's abilities and attitude over the long term? Some say yes, others are less concerned with them relative to their concerns about seeing a legitimate star (on and off the ice) potentially slip through Montreal's fingers. Fans with long memories point to Chris Chelios, another highly talented young man whose reputation got him traded out of Montreal before he reached the peak of his talents. For P.K. to buck the trend of the second contract in Montreal would be a break with history, and the Canadiens are not 100% sold that, regardless of the appeal of Subban, he is such a special case that he should receive special treatment relative to his peers.

Who Are Subban's Peers?

Establishing comparables is a difficult job, which is why it largely rests in the hands of supremely talented agents who negotiate on behalf of the players. Don Meehan is one of the best in the business, if not the best. He has been a representative of the top stars of the game for decades now, and deserves every bit of the reputation he has earned for being a skilled and savvy negotiator who always gets his star clients top dollars. Throughout this lengthy process with Subban, he has remained tight-lipped and careful not to divulge much, if any, information to the public about his objectives. All we truly know is that Subban wants a long-term deal with the Canadiens, and that he wants to be paid commensurate with what he brings to the team.

Let's look at the numbers for Subban in his young career. While his offensive production dropped off from 14 goals in 2010-11 to just 7 last season, he remained a vital part of the team's power play and penalty-killing units, logging an average of over 24 minutes of ice time per game, highest among all Canadiens. He was on the top pairing with Josh Gorges, which meant that Subban lined up against the other team's top offensive threats. On a disastrous season for the Canadiens, Subban emerged as a +9, which was an improvement of 17 goals for from the previous season. It is rare to see that happen on a team that finishes in last place and for a player who went from a mid-pairing role to a pre-eminent one on his team.

This is why it is so difficult to find comparables to Subban around the NHL. While he is not yet in the class of the likes of Shea Weber or Drew Doughty, two other top young defencemen who received long-term contracts while still in their RFA years (indeed, Doughty signed a monster contract coming off his entry-level contract and held out for a portion of last season to attain it), he is among the top young stars of the NHL. Those two other players play on their top lines, and Subban is just a couple notches below them in terms of talent and untapped potential. There are few young blueliners who have ascended to the pinnacle of their position as quickly as Subban, and that makes the search to find similar players of similar calibre difficult.

Some people pointed to the short-term, medium dollar contracts that were recently signed by Michael Del Zotto of the New York Rangers and Dmitry Kulikov of the Florida Panthers. Those comparisons are wildly off-base, in my opinion. Del Zotto signed a 2-year, \$5.1M contract and Kulikov signed a 2-year, \$5M contract, leading some to believe that Subban should receive a similar arrangement from Montreal. While those two players are good young talents, are either of them as integral to the fortunes of their respective clubs as Subban is to the Canadiens? Most GMs would eagerly jump at the opportunity to lock up Subban for that contract, but there is no possibility of that happening. On the Rangers



the more apt comparison is with Ryan McDonagh, who is presently in the final year of his entry-level deal; indeed, he and his agent are likely eagerly anticipating the deal that Subban signs so that they can use it as leverage in their own negotiations with the Rangers in the coming months.

Rather than look to those two players who were in a similar situation to Subban and signed deals after the lockout, there are three comparables out there that I would suspect Meehan is using in his negotiations with Bergevin: John Carlson of the Washington Capitals, Cam Fowler of the Anaheim Ducks, and Tyler Myers of the Buffalo Sabres.



Cam Fowler of the Anaheim Ducks is one of a handful of young defencemen in the NHL at the same level as P.K.

All three of these players are at the same skill level and assumed to have the same upside as Subban; indeed, one could argue that when he reaches his peak, Subban will surpass all three of them. These are the long-term deals that these three young defencemen signed coming off of their entry level contracts: Carlson, 6 years, \$23.8M, includes 3 years of UFA status; Fowler, 5 years, \$20, all RFA years; Myers, 7 years, \$38.5M, includes 3 years of UFA status. That works out to a range of between \$4M and \$5.5M per season for three potentially elite defencemen. True, Myers has a Calder Trophy to his credentials and is light-years ahead of his teammates when it comes to anchoring the blue line in Buffalo, so that extra money is well-merited. Carlson and Fowler are both key figures to their respective clubs, who play top minutes and earn the tougher assignments. Both Carlson's and Fowler's numbers are very close to Subban's through their first two campaigns and both will feature with their clubs for years to come.

Montreal's Own Salary Structure

While one may very well agree that Subban deserves to be paid an amount equal or similar to Carlson/Fowler/Myers, one also has to consider the Canadiens own salary cap structure and situation. Even though the compliance buyout of Scott Gomez was allowed to be accelerated, and there remains the potential for another to be used after this season on someone like Tomas Kaberle or Rene Bourque, the Canadiens do not have the most opportune situation in the next two years. The Habs have always been a team that spends right to the limit, as money is not an issue for the Molson empire. But with a cap limit of \$64.3M for 2013-14, and the team already having committed \$53.2M to just 16 players, a long-term big-dollar contract for Subban now could result in the Canadiens being unable to chase a top-level scoring threat to boost their offence.



As of today, the top salary-earners for the Canadiens are: Andrei Markov, \$5.75M; Tomas Kaberle, \$4.25M; and Josh Gorges, \$3.9M. His knees enable him, and Gorges features to be the next captain of the club once Brian Gionta's time in Montreal comes to a conclusion. Subban has had some minor conflicts (though with the Montreal media's unending glare, is there any conflict that is *duo*. P.K. is just being P.K., but occasionally that can rankle some people in the rather uptight hockey community. Would his teammates have an issue with the brash youngster, who still has much to prove and much maturing to do, showing up after holding out and already earning considerably more than the established veterans and stars of the time? And even if that is a non-issue, does management want to upset the apple cart with personnel by giving Subban preferential treatment to other players who had to go through the standard second contract process in Montreal? These are all rhetorical questions; I do not presume to know what any player or member of the organization thinks of Subban, but I raise them because they are pertinent questions that may or may not have an actual bearing in the locker room or organization dynamics in Montreal.

What Does It All Mean for Subban?



Habs fans can rest assured that they will be enjoying this young man's game for many years to come.

I am not usually one for prognostications, as I like to stick to the axiom that predictions are hard, especially those made about the future. While I do feel that the contract situation between Subban and the Canadiens will be resolved relatively quickly and that it will not have any adverse effects on the relationship between the player and the organization in the long haul, I do not really know exactly how this will all pan out. But as I look at the information available to me, and the discussion that has transpired in this article, I think that there will be a compromise position achieved that will placate both parties and set up a much longer and much bigger contract upon its conclusion.

With the opportunity afforded to the Canadiens by the compliance buyouts, and my belief that they will use it to take Kaberle's deal off the books, the team and Subban will ultimately agree upon a 3-year deal that will have a \$4.5M cap hit. It is not a full break with traditional second contracts awarded by Montreal, as they do retain Subban for one more year of RFA status upon the deal's expiration, and it gives Subban the assurance that he features prominently in the club's plans going forward. He will be fairly compensated for the level of play he brings on the ice and for the star power he attracts to the Canadiens off the ice. Most importantly of all, the flexibility in the extra year gives each side the opportunity to see exactly where Subban's level of play will be as he enters into the prime years of his career. There the Canadiens can make the determination to offer a long-term extension of up to 8 years and a much larger portion of the team's salary cap pie if they feel that Subban has grown into the elite calibre defenceman that he feels he can be and that the team and the fans hope he will be.



HOF Voters Strike Out By J.K. Lebert aka jrlebert



I get it. People are upset. For years, what we now call “The Steroid Era”, players, managers, front office personnel, trainers, and maybe even the peanut vendors engaged in a massive scheme to defraud the fans, other players, and the grand old game of baseball. Much has been written, from the Mitchell Report, to books by Jose Canseco, and countless other articles, about how this has affected the game, its legacy, and all of the players, both those involved, and those innocent.

Along came the 2013 HOF ballot, and for the first time, the writers who covered the game then, and still cover it now, had a chance to make their statement. Would it be a “Shot Heard Round Cooperstown?” After all, these are, seemingly, the most

qualified men and women of their ilk to be able to express such an opinion on these players and their acts of deceit. We will, conveniently, for the moment, forget that these were the very same people who covered McGwire, Sosa, and Bonds as they crushed balls out of stadiums for years, but I digress.

So, after having an entire year to examine the ballot, and at least five years to contemplate what to do as these players all retired, what did our esteemed writers do with their chance to fire away from their soapbox? In baseball terms, it was a collective swing and a miss. Mighty Casey didn’t just strike out. No, he struck out with the winning run on 3rd, with 2 outs in the bottom of the 9th, in Game 7 of the World Series, on national television, with all of their friends and family in attendance.

Baseball writers, please understand this one, simple fact: You blew it. Yes, I know, I know. You have done it before. You had a chance to elect Buck O’Neil while he was still alive, but chose not to, despite him being baseball’s greatest living historian, and a true tribute to the Negro Leagues. You had a chance to elect the recently departed Marvin Miller while he was still alive, but, again, because of some ruffled feathers and hurt feelings, you chose to leave out a man whose accomplishments rang out across not only baseball, but across every major professional sport. You’ve had a dozen seasons to make it right for Alan Trammell, but continue to flail away. And this season, you allowed Bernie Williams to fall off the ballot, just as you did Lou Whitaker a decade ago, without delving a bit deeper into careers. But writers, NOTHING compares to the “statement” that you supposedly made when it came to the offenders of the Steroid Era.

I understand many of the writers’ stances on the era. If you used PEDs, you’re out. Cut, dry, simple. It allows for someone to never have to think about their judgment, or question if they are really making the right call. It’s black and white. Allowing for that standard to hold, I will, just as conveniently, omit the careers of Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Sammy Sosa, Mark McGwire, and Rafael Palmeiro, for this discussion, even if I personally disagree with these writers on this topic.



In an effort to punish this group of cheaters, which they clearly are, the writers made one, fatal flaw. They threw out not just the baby, but the entire tub and kitchen sink, with the bath water. How, when tasked to vote for the most deserving players, up to TEN on one ballot, for the greatest honor than can be placed upon a former player, can some writers submit BLANK ballots, when the year before, they voted for some of the very same players who were on the ballot in 2013?! What kind of sense does that make? “OK, Jimmy, since you hit Billy, the entire class now has to stand in the corner and think about what YOU did.” WHAT?!? How is that fair? It’s not that one writer did this, mind you. FIVE. Five writers submitted blank ballots. STRIKE ONE, writers.

Hal Bodley, of USA Today, went as far as to say this BBWAA vote sent a message “loud and clear” on the steroids issue. Curt Schilling (more on him in a bit) was quoted as saying that everyone was guilty; either you used or did nothing to stop their use. I think this statement is massively oversimplified. Even if players did speak up, who do they tell? The manager, whose team is performing better, at least in the box score, and has more quality tools at his disposal? The GM, who is responsible for the product on the field, a product that is now throwing a faster fastball, a better curveball, or hitting more home runs, cementing his own job security? The owner, whose sales of tickets, jerseys, concessions, and even parking are booming, filling his pockets with extra cash? Would a player risk being labeled as a whistleblower, garnering the ire of his fellow players? Looking at the backlash Jose Canseco received initially, years after the events he described happened, tells you all you need to know. It’s very possible that many of these players did, in fact, say something, and were shouted down for one, if not all of these reasons.



So who, in fact, are you sending this “loud and clear”, everyone is guilty message to? Is this just one, large, disingenuous pat on the back to yourself and fellow writers? These same writers who conveniently covered up what they saw and heard in the locker rooms, on team planes and buses, and off the record, for years, until they, too, were now implicated in the cover up? STRIKE TWO, writers.

The biggest mistake the writers made, however, was leaving, in my opinion, at least five players out of the Hall, who were never connected with steroids, not in the Mitchell Report, a Canseco book, grand jury testimony, or anywhere else, who clearly deserve election.

Craig Biggio, the Astros all-time great, performed at a high level for 20 seasons, despite throwing his body around the field at catcher, second base, and the outfield. Only 15 men have suited up for more games. Only 10 men have come up to bat more. All of this despite having been hit by a pitch more times than anyone since 1903 and stealing more than 400 bases. He was named an All Star at two completely different positions (catcher and second base) a total of 7 times, won 4 Gold Gloves, and 5 Silver Sluggers.



He reached one of baseball's storied numbers, 3000 hits, in his final year, and had the highest hit total and run total (1844, 15th all time) of anyone on the ballot. The point of the game is, still, to hit the ball and score runs, right? There is a stat on baseball-reference.com called Similarity Scores. Simply described, it is a score of the sum total of your career, and which other players are closest to your sum total. Who are the two "most similar" careers to Biggio? Robin Yount and Derek Jeter.

After a brilliant 20-year run, on the ballot for the first time in 2013, Biggio somehow missed election, garnering just 68.2% of the vote, with 75% needed. How?

Fellow first-timer on the ballot, Mike Piazza, suffered the same fate. The greatest offensive catcher of all time, despite a video-game like career slash line of .308/427/1335, an OPS+ of 143, a DOZEN All Star selections, 10 Silver Sluggers, and a ROY award, still only received 57.8% of the vote, reportedly due to allegations of "backne", back acne that may have been due to using PED's, despite not even a whisper of anything during his career. Who are his three most similar career scores? Johnny Bench, Yogi Berra, and Gary Carter. Yikes.

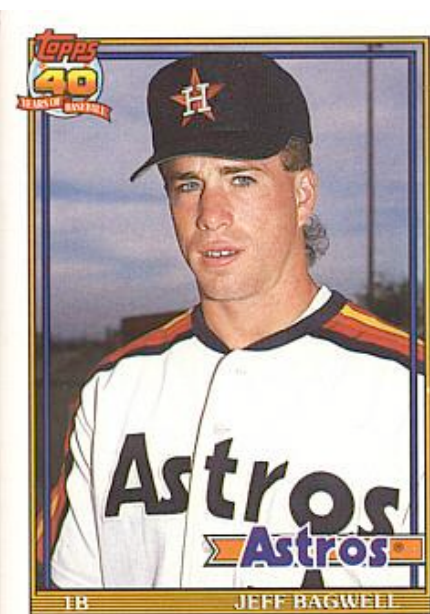


Another first-timer, Curt Schilling, is, by far, the most qualified non-PED user on the ballot, yet failed to be inducted. Fourteen pitchers in the history of baseball have struck out more men, and only 25 have a higher WAR (Wins Above a Replacement Player) than Curt. Overshadowed by Randy Johnson on the great Diamondbacks teams, Schilling was a 6-time All Star, a 3-time CYA runner up, and 3 times a 20-game winner. Of pitchers since 1980, only Pedro Martinez, Tom Seaver, and Johan Santana have a lower career WHIP than Schilling's 1.137, which is, coincidentally, lower than Roger Clemens. More important than all of his regular season accomplishments, Schilling's 11-2 career postseason record and his 4-1 World Series record, stand out among the all-time greats. Over the course of a fabulous career, he won the Gehrig, Ruth, Rickey, Hutch, and Clemente awards, to go along with his 2001 World Series MVP. Despite all of this, he received just 38.8% of the vote.

Two holdovers, Jeff Bagwell (3rd year) and Tim Lincecum (6th), were also inexplicably left out of the Hall in 2013.

Whatever records Biggio doesn't own in Astros history, Bagwell does. Jeff sports the highest non-PED user total on the ballot in three key stats: WAR, walks, and OPS+ (basically, a player's measure of offensive output vs. the league average). Bagwell had 6 seasons hitting over .300, 8 with 300+ total bases, 6 top-9 MVP finishes, including winning the award in 1994, four All-Star selections, 3 Silver Slugger awards, a ROY, and a Gold Glove on his shelf. His slash line is unreal: .297/449/1529. Still, just 59.6% of the voters cast a ballot for Bagwell.

Playing squarely in the shadow of the greatest leadoff hitter in the history of the





game, Rickey Henderson, Tim Lincecum put up numbers at the top of the lineup that players in today's game don't come near. Since Lincecum retired in 2002, only three players have stolen 70 bases, each doing it once. From 1981-1986 (six seasons), Lincecum stole AT LEAST 70 bases each year, including an incredible 71 in just 88 games in 1981! The 7-time All-Star has the 5th most stolen bases in history, and at the time of his retirement, had the best stolen base percentage EVER (min. 100 attempts). On the ballot, excluding PED users, he had the second most hits, walks, and runs of anyone eligible. He does appear to be making some headway with voters, having seen his total increase from just 24.3% in 2008, his first year, to 52.2% in 2013. Still, he should be in.

Not electing a single one of these five guys? Sorry, writers, but that's STRIKE THREE. You're out. It's awfully hard to hear your "statement" over the boos of the fans you have disappointed.





Racing Newsletter By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy

13 Questions for 2013

Don't look now but the shortest off-season in professional sports is quickly coming to an end. The Daytona 500 is less than 40 days away and with a new, young, and brash champion and an extremely good-looking new race car, 2013 holds all the potential to be one of Nascar's best and most storyline-filled seasons ever. With that here are the 13 questions I am pondering for 2013.



1. **Will the "Gen 6" race car produce better racing?** There was no hiding the fact that 2012 from a racing standpoint was rather lackluster. The Nationwide and Camping World Truck Series lower tier races were consistently more competitive affairs last year. Aside from this fact the COT as a race car was never popular from the beginning, both with fans and drivers (anyone remember Kyle Busch after winning in the COT's debut at Bristol?). The Gen 6 car already has one positive going for it in that it looks spectacular. If the racing can match the car's looks then 2013 will fare much better. I am going to gamble that it will improve the racing but not to a huge extent.
2. **Can Brad Keselowski repeat?**-Michigan's own brash, young, beer consuming 2012 champion will look to repeat in 2013. After shocking everyone last year by out-dueling Jimmie Johnson in the chase, Brad is poised along with crew chief Paul Wolfe for another championship run. The only question surrounding the Penske team is a switch to Ford from Dodge, who pulled out of the sport after last year. More than likely it will have a minimal effect. Look for Brad to be a perennial contender for many years to come.
3. **How good will Matt Kenseth be?**-A team switch for the first time in his career lands the 2003 champion in the powerful and well-sponsored #20 car for Joe Gibbs Racing. After winning 3 times last year including the



Daytona 500 Kenseth is looking to contend for a title with his new team. He is surrounded by the tools to do so and more than likely will contend for race wins and be in the chase. Do not expect him to win the title in his first year out though.

4. **Is Joey Logano for real or not?**-Logano was kicked out of his 20 ride at JGR last year in favor of Kenseth and the year before that was rumored to be out in case Carl Edwards bolted RFR. Now Logano is in the 22 Penske car as a teammate to champion Brad Keselowski. The equipment and team is solid and has shown it can win with a capable driver when Kurt Busch drove the car. Logano is coming off a spectacular Nationwide season and 1 win in Cup last year but he still has not lived up to his "sliced bread" moniker. Logano is still remarkably young and has time to mature, but he needs to perform well this year to ensure a long-term status with Penske.
5. **Will Carl Edwards and Kyle Busch show up this year?**-2 of Nascar's most well-known drivers fell off the face of the earth last year, both missing the chase and struggling mightily. After having won over 40 races over two series in one year a few years previous the two combined for just 2 wins last year, Busch in Cup at Richmond and Edwards in a one-off Nationwide race at Watkins Glen. Both of their struggles were well documented last year and both are looking to rebound. With a new crew chief in the experienced Jimmy Fennig Edwards should run well. In Kyle's case returning to the JGR rocketship in the Nationwide Series should enable him to pile up some wins and grow his confidence. Expect both to return to the chase this year.
6. **Danica Patrick-sideshow or competitor in cup?**-Danica Patrick enters her first full-time Cup Series season this year after a couple of Nationwide Series seasons. Despite not winning a Nationwide race Danica has proven capable on road courses and superspeedways in particular and contends within the top 10 on these circuits. Danica will no doubt be a story regardless of how she runs this year. As a rookie do not expect her to light the world on fire. Her close friend and fellow rookie 2-time consecutive Nationwide champion Ricky Stenhouse should fare much better. Danica will show glimmers of hope but also make a lot of mistakes. She is talented but this is going to be a slow process.
7. **Kurt Busch's last shot?**-After another drama-filled year in the Phoenix Racing 51 Kurt was picked up by Furniture Row Racing who inexplicably dumped good driver and good person Regan Smith in favor of the talented but temperamental Busch. The end of last year brought some top 10 runs for the group but this year is the test. Kurt is a few more explosions and profanity-filled rants at media from being canned by the whole sport. If he can maintain composure the underdog team just might win some races.
8. **Michael Waltrip racing one year wonders?**-No. After a shockingly good 2012 campaign Michael Waltrip Racing let it be known that they are Nascar's newest top tier team. Clint Bowyer finished a quiet 2nd in points with 3 victories while teammate Martin Truex Jr. came perilously close to a race win and made the chase. The 3rd team car driven by Mark Martin and Brian Vickers also contended for wins. Michael Waltrip Racing is for real and will continue to be. With the same solid driver line-up back for 2013 they will contend again.
9. **Who will be the surprise of 2013?**-This is beyond tricky. The logical answer seems to be rookie Ricky Stenhouse who should run fairly well in the RFR #17 departed by Matt Kenseth. However I am going with the



RPM team of Aric Almirola and Marcos Ambrose. Both showed potential in 2012 with Ambrose winning a classic Watkins Glen race. I believe Almirola has the potential to become the next first time winner in Cup along with Stenhouse.

10. **How will Kevin Harvick fare in a lame duck season?**-Harvick has already announced his intentions to go to Stewart-Haas Racing for 2014 leaving him in a lame duck season at Richard Childress Racing in the 29 car. The relationship has had its successes but also been tumultuous at times. Childress seems focused on his two grandsons the Dillons getting to Cup soon and Harvick is looking towards greener pastures. Do not expect anything spectacular from them this year, maybe a win or two but not in contention.
11. **Nationwide title favorite?**-Lost in the off-season mess is the new look of the Nationwide Series. Two-time defending champ Ricky Stenhouse is gone to the Cup Series leaving the title for someone else to get. The natural answer is Elliott Sadler who has fallen just short two years in a row and is now at the powerful JGR team. However look for Regan Smith in the #5 and Brian Vickers in the JGR team car to Sadler to contend. My money is on Vickers.
12. **Are less people in the stands a big issue?**-Last year and almost every year since Nascar's heyday of grandstand-packed insanity in the mid 1990s the media completely freaks out when the stands are not full leaving some to wonder if there is a problem. The answer is a resounding no. On average there are still 80 to 100,000 people or more at any given race weekend, more than all other sporting events in this nation. The sport is healthy, evidenced by a new television contract which paid heavily for the sport. Everyone relax.
13. **Who will be the 2013 champion?**-Jimmie Johnson over Denny Hamlin, Brad Keselowski, and Matt Kenseth in a close 4 way battle.





SCF Official Review: 2012/13 Panini Classics Signatures

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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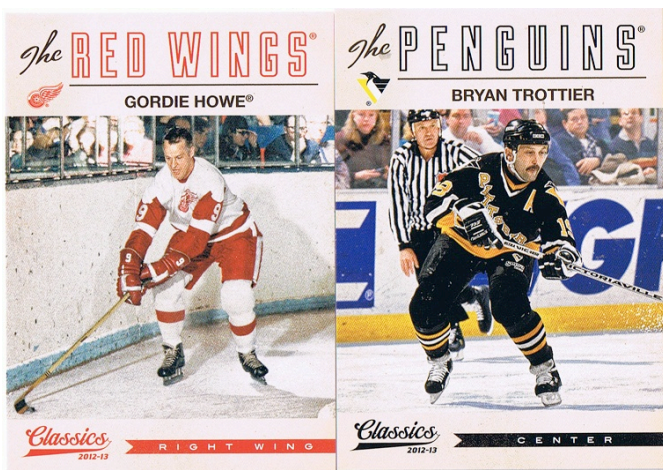
Look For Autographs Of The NHL's Most Storied Franchises.

INAUGURAL INKS

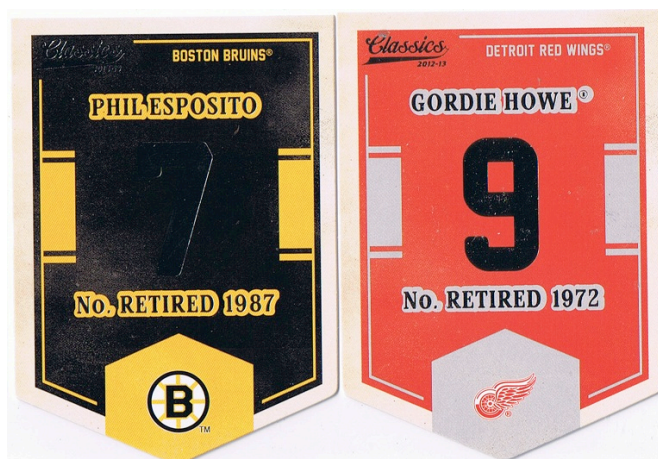
Inaugural Inks Showcases Hall Of Fame Players Along With Inscriptions Of Their Induction Year.

WHAT WE PULLED

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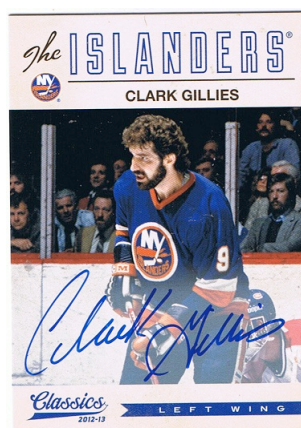


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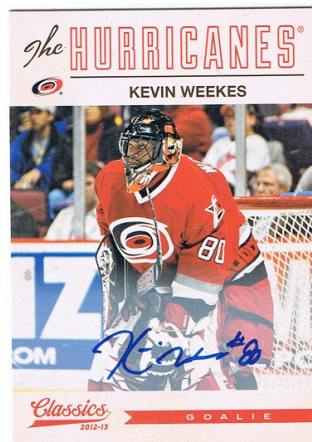
Retired Numbers (6)

Clark Gillies Autograph



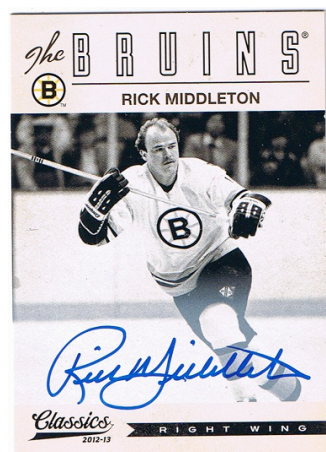


Nick Kypreos Autograph

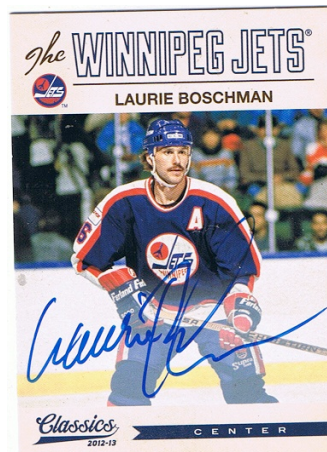


Kevin Weekes Autograph

Rick Middleton Autograph



Laurie Boschman Autograph



Classic Combos Ulf Samuelsson/Kjell Samuelsson Dual Autograph /100





FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 5/5

Fun - 4.5/5

Value - 3/5

Rebuy - 2/5

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Too many unnumbered autographs (should be a limited run)

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All of the base and inserts are available for request. Please PM me with the card or cards of interest. Cards are available for 30 days from the time this review is posted. As always, only VIPs can make requests for the first 48 hours.



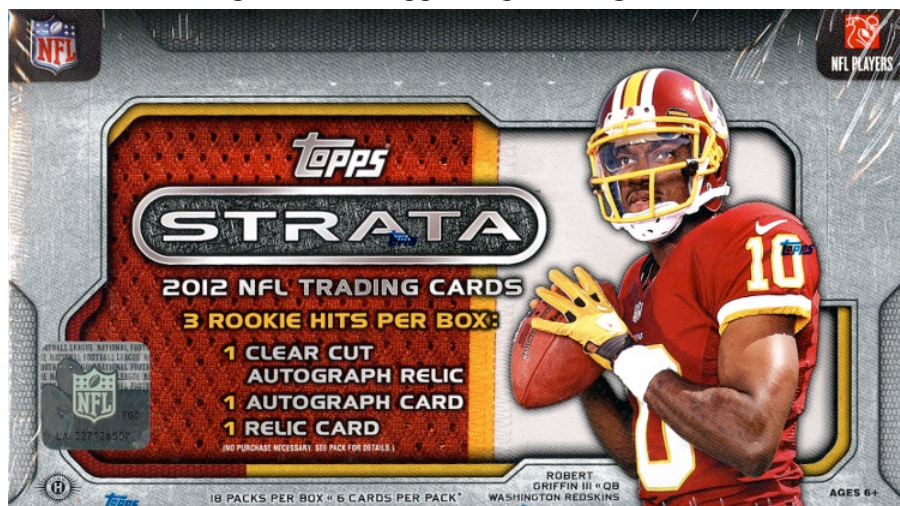
PANINI



SCF Official Review: 2012 Topps Strata

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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



18 packs per box

6 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$99.99 - \$109.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

BOX GUARANTEES:

- 1 Clear Cut Autograph Relic Card
- 1 Rookie Autograph Card
- 1 Rookie Relic Card
- 1 Rookie Die-Cut Card

CASE GUARANTEES

- 1 Strata Signature Relic Rookie Card
- 3 Clear Cut Autograph Patch Rookie Cards
- 3 Rookie Patch Cards

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

AUTOGRAPH RELIC CARDS

Clear Cut Autograph Relic Rookie Cards - Featuring up to 40 subjects!



3 Autograph Patch Parallels Per Case!

These 1-per-Hobby-Box cards feature the largest jumbo jersey swatch tolerated within a card (measuring 2.875" x 1.875"), which is trapped underneath a transparent card front that features a player's image and his signature. We took it a step further and created a die-cut window so the relic underneath can actually be felt. Sequentially Numbered.

- Bronze Parallel - sequentially numbered to 150.
- Gold Parallel - sequentially numbered to 99.
- Blue PATCH Parallel - sequentially numbered to 75. Hobby Only!
- Green PATCH Parallel - sequentially numbered to 55. Hobby Only!
- Red PATCH Parallel - sequentially numbered to 30. Hobby Only!
- Platinum SPIKES Parallel - Featuring cleat relic #d 1/1. Hobby Only!
- Platinum GLOVES Parallel - Featuring glove relic #d 1/1. Hobby Only!
- Platinum RG3 SOCKS Parallel - Featuring sock relic #d 1/1. Hobby Only!
- Platinum PATCH Parallel sequentially numbered 1/1. Hobby Only!

Clear Cut Dual Autograph Relic Rookie PATCH Book Cards

- Featuring up to 10 subjects: A book card version of the Clear Cut Auto Relic Rookie Card. Seq #d 1/1 Hobby Only!

Strata Signature Relic Cards

Featuring up to 40 subjects! 1 Per Case!

The card that inspired the product, the Strata Signature Relic card uses cutting-edge technology to deliver a 3-layered card construction featuring jumbo jersey swatches and both sticker and On-Card Autographs! #d to 35 Hobby Only!

- PATCH Parallel - featuring a jersey patch #d to 15. Hobby Only!
- Rivet PATCH Parallel - featuring a jersey patch and a rivet, which will enable the 3 different layers of the card to fan out. #d to 5. Hobby Only!

AUTOGRAPH CARDS

Rookie Autographs

- Featuring up to 50 subjects!
- Autograph cards of the 2012 NFL Rookie class. Seq #d to various quantities
- Bronze Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 150.
 - Gold Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 99.
 - Blue Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 75.
 - Green Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 50.
 - Red Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 25
 - Platinum Parallel - Sequentially numbered. 1/1. Hobby Only!

Quad Rookie Autograph Book Card Up to 3 subjects!

The most collectible combos of 4 rookies. Seq #d 1/1. HOBBY ONLY!



RELIC CARDS

3 Patch Parallels per Hobby Case

Rookie Relic Cards - 40 subjects!

Top rookies featuring a jersey swatch. #d to Various quantities HOBBY ONLY!

- Bronze Parallel (40 subjects): #d to 150. Hobby Only!
- Gold Parallel (40 subjects): #d to 99. Hobby Only!
- Blue PATCH Parallel (40 subjects): #d to 75. Hobby Only!
- Green PATCH Parallel (40 subjects): #d to 55. Hobby Only!
- Red PATCH Parallel (40 subjects): #d to 30. Hobby Only!
- Platinum PATCH Parallel (40 subjects): #d 1/1. Hobby Only!

BASE CARDS - 36 PT STOCK!

Veterans (100 subjects): Top performing NFL superstars.

Rookies (50 subjects): The hottest freshmen of the 2012 NFL season. Hobby-Exclusive Photography!

- Bronze Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 150. Hobby Only!
- Gold Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 99. Hobby Only!
- Blue Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 50. Hobby Only!
- Green Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 10. Hobby Only!
- Red Parallel - Sequentially numbered to 1/1. Hobby Only!
- Printing Plates - Printing plates sequentially numbered to 1/1. Hobby Only!

INSERT CARDS

A perimeter die-cut card celebrating the NFL's top rookies. Inserted 1:24

Autograph Rookie Die-Cut Parallel - #d to 5. Hobby Only!

WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTzmL4GQ-qg>

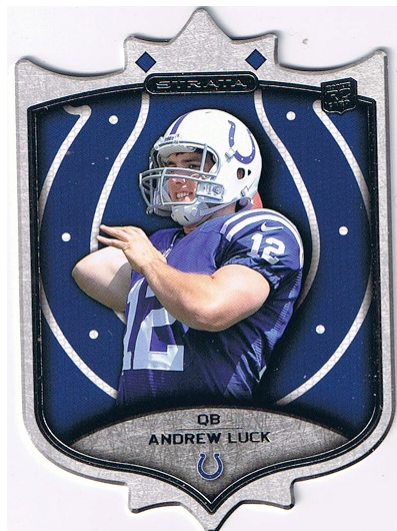
Base - 98/150 (65.3%)

Dupes - 4





Rookie Die Cut (1) - Andrew Luck



Dre Kirkpatrick Base Rookie Autograph Redemption



Michael Egnew Clear Cut Jersey/Autograph



Russell Wilson 2-color Patch /41



FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 4.5/5

Fun - 3.5/5

Value - 3.5/5

Rebuy - 4/5

Overall - 19.5/25 (78%)



Pros:

Clear Cut Autographs are nice to look at, good idea
Continuation of Die Cut theme across the 2012 products
Design is solid and nice to see a different product

Cons:

Player pool for the Clear Cut Autographs are too spread out
One numbered parallel every two boxes
Should be a base parallel die cut

NPN Information:

NPN 2012 TOPPS STRATA SIGNATURES FOOTBALL
PO Box 2230
Duryea, PA 18642

Limit 1 request per household

Postmarked By: 1/23/13
Received By: 1/30/13

Canada Skills: $3 + 11 \times 2 - 4 = ?$

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All base are available for request. Please PM me with the card or cards of interest. Cards are available for 30 days from the time this review is posted. As always, only VIPs may make requests for the first 48 hours.





SCF Official Review: 2012/13 Panini Prizm

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

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (Online): \$100.00 (Panini MAPP)

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- Look for design and photography-driven insert sets that play to this extraordinary print technology!
- Huge base set with 100 rookies to chase! Prizms and Gold Prizms Parallels.
- Prizm delivers a familiar, but dramatically improved technology that has been missing from the Basketball Hobby!
- Chase a 300-card base set geared for player, team and set collectors, and look for the rare Prizm Parallels!
- Prizm also continues Panini America's massive and historic double Rookie Card class!
- 100-card Autographs set with Prizm variations; two autographs per box!

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Common

Each card is etched to bring a 3D look to this incredible print technology!

Autographs

Look for two autograph cards per box!



USA Basketball

Pays homage to the 2012 USA Basketball Team with a patriotic design!

Most Valuable Players

Features the game's most prestigious award winners with an expansive 25-card checklist!

Finalists

Look for the NBA's top players and champions!

WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXaAKaJtED4>

Kobe Anthology (5)



Base - 75/200 (37.5%)

Rookies - 37/100 (37%)





Refractors (3)
 Finalists (1)
 Most Valuable Players (1)
 USA Basketball (1)



Meyers Leonard Autograph



Robert Sacre Autograph



FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5
 Design - 5/5
 Fun - 3/5
 Value - 2/5
 Rebuy - 3/5

Total - 17/25 (68%)

Pros:
 Sleek metal card design
 Nice blend of rookies, veterans and retired players

Cons:
 Price per auto is brutal in a mid-end product
 Sticker Autographs



Rookie card confusion (no indicators on card)
Only wow factor is the look of the cards

NPN Information:

NPN, 2012 Panini Prizm Basketball
5325 FAA Blvd, Suite 100A
Irving TX 75061-3601

Limit two entries per household, mailed separately

Postmarked By: 1/30/13
Received By: 2/6/13

Canada Skills: $869 + 592 / 296 \times 117 - 726 = ?$

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.

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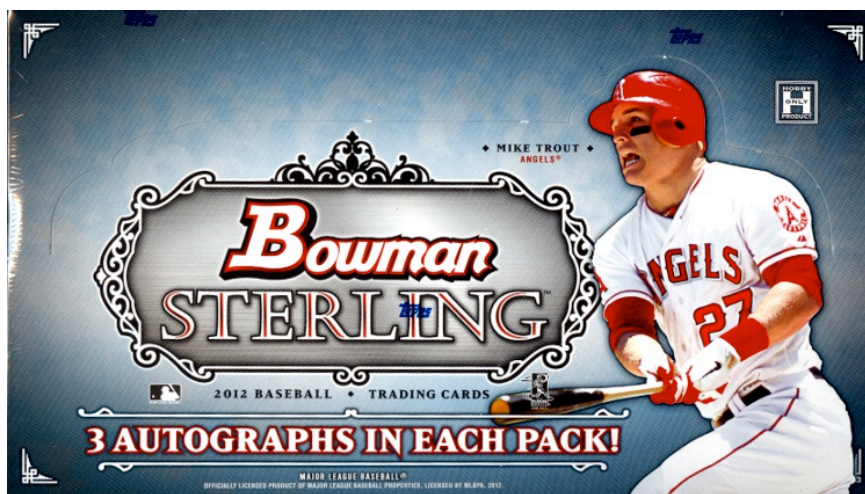




SCF Official Review: 2012 Bowman Sterling

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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



6 packs per box

4 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$274.99 - \$299.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

EVERY PACK WILL INCLUDE:

- 3 Autograph Cards
- 1 Rookie or Prospect Card

CONTENT HIGHLIGHTS

STERLING AUTOGRAPH SHOWCASE!

Autograph cards of the top prospect & rookie performers from the 2012 season. Each card is embedded in a sterling silver frame. #d to 25. NEW!

- Sterling Cards Cards are made from Sterling Silver. 1/1. NEW!

NEXT IN LINE

For the first time, Bowman asked its collectors to submit ideas to be used as an insert in this year's Bowman Sterling product. We selected the theme submitted by Guillaume Robert-Demolaize. The insert is called "Next in Line," and each card will feature a rookie and an up and coming prospect from the same team. Congrats Guillaume! NEW!

- Autographs (up to 5 different cards) #d to 5

NICKNAME AUTOGRAPHED CARDS

Players will sign their nickname on a card numbered to 15. New!



DUAL AUTOGRAPHS

Up to 10 different cards. #'d to 99 or less.

- Gold (#'d to 50)
- Black (#'d to 25)
- Purple (#'d to 10)
- Red (1 of 1)
- Canary Diamond (1 of 1)
- Printing Plate (1 of 1)

Yu Darvish signed baseball redemption

- 25 Redemption cards for signed Yu Darvish baseballs. New!

Bowman Black (25 subjects)

- The program continues from Bowman. #'d to 25.

PRINTING PLATES

- 4 Printing Plates of each of the 50 Rookie Card subjects and each of the 50 prospect insert card subjects.

BASE CARDS

Rookie Cards

50 Top 2012 Rookie players.

- Refractors #'d to 199
- Gold refractors #'d to 50
- Black refractors #'d to 25
- Purple Refractors #'d to 10
- Red Refractors #'d 1/1
- Canary Diamond Refractors #'d 1/1

Autographed Rookie Cards

Autographs of up to 15 RC subjects.

- Refractors #'d to 199
- Gold refractors #'d to 50
- Black refractors #'d to 25
- Purple Refractors #'d to 10
- Red Refractors #'d 1/1
- Canary Diamond Refractors #'d 1/1

PROSPECT CARDS

Prospect Cards - 50 up & coming Baseball talents

- Refractors #'d to 199
- Gold refractors #'d to 50



- Black refractors #'d to 25
- Purple Refractors #'d to 10
- Red Refractors #'d 1/1

Autographed Prospect Cards

Autographs of up to 65 Major League prospects.

- Refractors #'d to 199
- Gold refractors #'d to 50
- Black refractors #'d to 25
- Purple Refractors #'d to 10
- Red Refractors #'d 1/1.
- Canary Diamond Refractors #'d 1/1.
- Printing Plates numbered 1/1

WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUWV10Du4J8>

My apologies in advance for the scans. The blue background got faded out by my scanner which also affected showing off the autographs.

Travis D'Arnaud Prospects



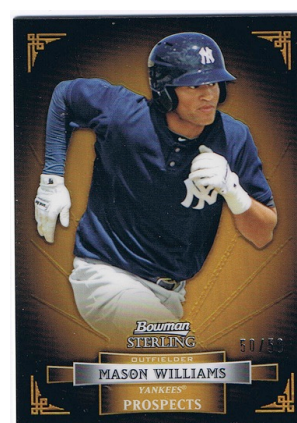
Matt Harvey Black Refractor /199



Jonathan Galvez Black Refractor /199



Mason Williams Gold Refractor /50

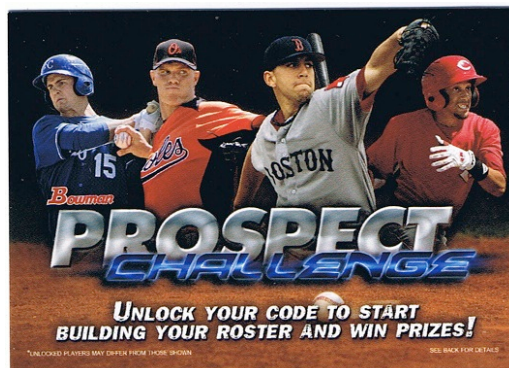




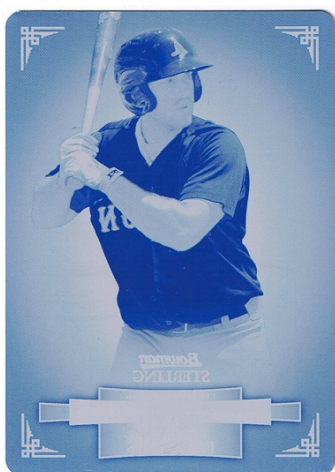
Next In Line Rymer Liriano/Yasmani Grandal



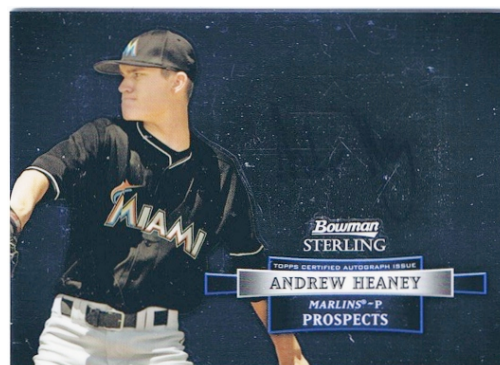
Prospect Challenge Code Card



Travis Shaw Cyan Printing Plate 1/1



Andrew Heaney Autograph



Brian Johnson Autograph



Bruce Maxwell Autograph





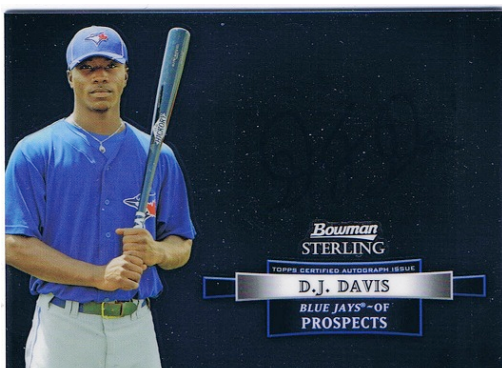
Courtney Hawkins Autograph



Chris Heston Autograph



D.J. Davis Autograph



Jamie Jarmon Autograph



Keon Barnum Autograph



Lewis Brinson Autograph





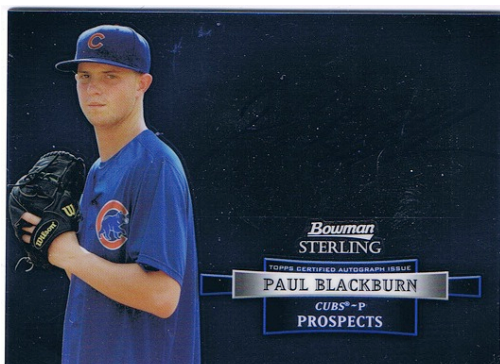
Matthew Olson Autograph



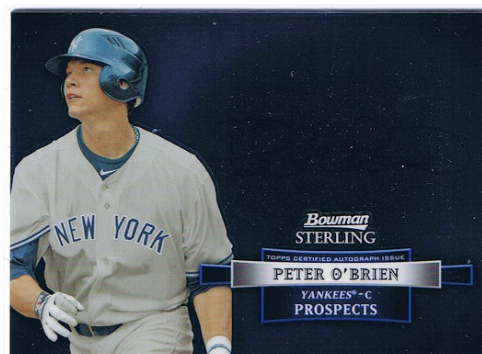
Nolan Fontana Autograph



Paul Blackburn Autograph



Peter O'Brien Autograph



Rymer Liriano Autograph



Steve Bean Autograph





Steve Clevenger Autograph



Ty Hensley Autograph



Xander Bogaerts / Jackie Bradley Jr. Dual
Autograph Redemption
FINAL THOUGHTS

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

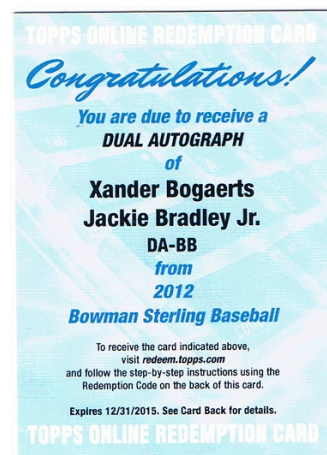
Overall - 16/20 (80%)

Pros:
On Card Autographs Galore
All hits are autographs
Design is sharp
Quick and enjoyable break

NPN 2012 Bowman Sterling Baseball
PO Box 785
Pittston PA 18640

Limit 1 request per household

Postmarked By: 3/6/12
Received By: 3/13/12
Canada Skills: $50 \times 2 + 25 - 14 = ?$



Cons:
One less card per pack
Price is still steep
Limited target audience

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INTERESTED IN GETTING SOME OF YOUR CARDS GRADED?

CHECK OUT OUR BECKETT BULK GRADING SUBMISSION THREADS!

YOUR CARDS COULD COME BACK LIKE THESE!

KEEP AN EYE OUT ON THIS FORUM FOR NEW SUBMISSION THREADS: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/forums/53-General-Sports-Card-Talk>





The Bob

By Matthew Schultz aka MattDMC

As many of you may have noticed by the banner in my signature and many of my posts, I've made it fairly obvious that I collect Sergei Bobrovsky and that he is my favorite goalie in the league. With that said here's the story of how he became my favorite and how the collection began.

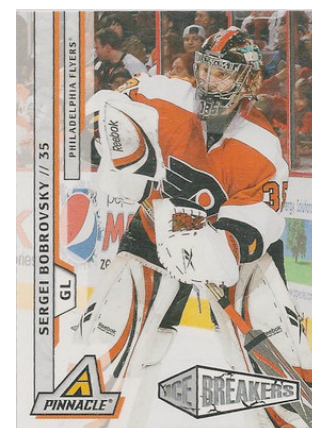


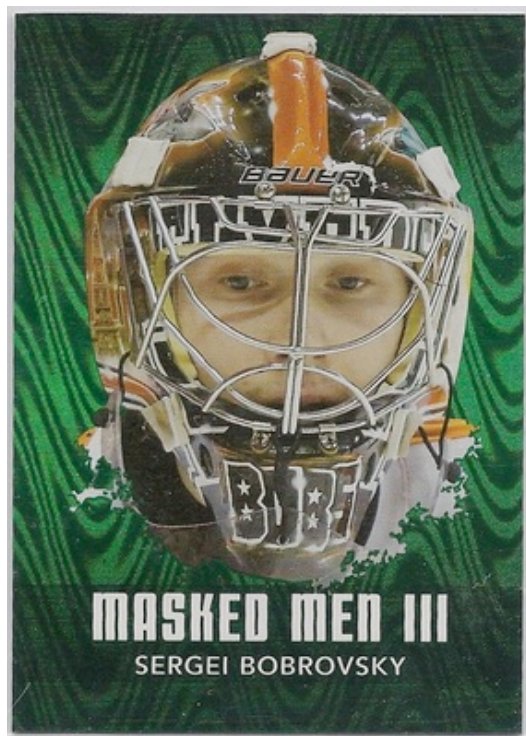
Now, I will admit I haven't been a hockey fan for long and haven't followed the game as long as most of the members on the site but when I finally did get into it, I was hooked. When I was a kid growing up in the 90s I wasn't really interested in hockey I would rather watch football or nascar. The only time I remember watching hockey growing up was when my parents would jump on the bandwagon when the home team made the playoffs, which being in Detroit was every season so I do have some early hockey memories of the likes of Yzerman, Shanahan, Fedorov and co.

The first time I finally started watching and fully getting interested in hockey was the 07-08 Season and I was instantly hooked. I found myself watching every Wings and Flyers game that I could since I found watching and cheering for those two clubs very enjoyable. For me, that season was perfect as both of my teams respectively made their Conference Finals with the Wings ultimately winning it all. The next couple of seasons were just as great with the Wings making the Finals to play Pittsburgh again and then a year later it was the Flyers turn in the Finals to take on Chicago but both sadly fell short. During those 3 seasons while I was watching hockey I also saw myself slowly breaking into the collecting world by picking up singles and autos of the two teams but what would happen the next season would change my collecting for ever.

The 10-11 season started out for me exactly like the last couple had, with me sitting in my room watching the Flyers via Center Ice on my laptop. The start of the season was an interesting one as Michael Leighton was injured for the Flyers and that meant they had to use somebody else, that somebody else would be Sergei Bobrovsky. An undrafted kid out of Russia, Bob (Bobrovsky) would get the start against Pittsburgh and I remember saying to myself as he came onto the ice "Who the heck is this kid?". He would go on to win the game and become the youngest Philly goaltender to win a season opener. After the opener, he went on to go 11-3-1 in his first 15 starts highlighted by a 10 game streak with no regulation loses, needless to say I was impressed and had found my player.

Watching his rookie season with every game that went by, I found myself liking Bob more and more with each start, his flexibility and mobility in the crease made him a great show to watch. I liked watching and cheering for Bob so much that I had bought myself a jersey of his for Christmas and wore it for every Flyers game the next two years. Other than the jersey, I also found myself buying a couple of cards of his, nothing fancy just a Young Guns and Pinnacle rookie which were my first two cards of his but little did I know at the time, that those would certainly not be the last 2 cards I'd get.





My decision to fully partake into a complete player collection would come nearly a year later in late 2011 early 2012. Earlier in April (2011) In The Game released its annual Between the Pipes set which was great as it featured a plethora of Bobrovskys which gave me a chance to pick up a couple here and there but one of them would lead to the start of my addiction... the Masked Men III Emerald. I had originally picked one up and thought nothing of it other than it's a nice looking insert and put it into my Flyers binder but shortly after, I would find out a little more about it. It seemed that ITG had made a printing error on the card and that to make up for it, they were having a redemption program to set things right, all you had to do was send in 17 cards. Originally I was on the fence about it going back and fourth for a couple of months if I wanted to do it or not and originally told myself I wouldn't. It wouldn't be until December 12th, 2011 when I saw RGM81 post his Carey Price redemption he had just gotten that I decided to follow suit and do the

redemption myself. I just fell in love with the card and knew I had to get the Bobrovsky one. After a couple of months of frantically checking eBay and posting new threads on the forum, I had finally found my 17 Masked Men. I definitely overpaid on most of them but I was hooked and I wanted it bad. That mini addiction to the Masked Men Emerald would start to fuel an even larger addiction to collecting Bobrovsky because at that time, I only had 13 cards including the Masked Men, today I'm at 102 with no end in sight.

With the collecting aspect now out of the way lets get back to the hockey focus. The 10-11 Playoffs weren't very friendly to the rookie called Bob with a second round elimination but things were looking great heading for next season as it would appear Philly had a new starting goalie in Bob... or at least they did until they announced the massive signing of Ilya Bryzgalov. With the amount of money they were paying for Bryzs' contract you knew they weren't going to have him play backup which could only mean Bryz would be getting the starting job off Bob. As a fan coming off a big rookie year, it really hurt to see Bob's





days numbered. Luckily for Bob though, Bryz's start of the 11-12 season was a bit streaky both good and bad which gave Bob plenty of chances to start and play including the Winter Classic in which Bob looked great in the net but the Rangers were just slightly better. The season would be capped off with a second round run in the Playoffs and unfortunately both Bobrovsky and Bryzgalov were torn apart in the net. After the Playoffs, I found myself in an even bigger mess as Bobrovsky was traded to the Blue Jackets. I was a Philly fan so it was easy to cheer for Bob when he played in Philly, I had no idea if I would still be able to cheer for him playing for another team, I was caught at a crossroads.

Unfortunately Columbus would have to wait as the NHL went into another Lockout which for me was actually a blessing in disguise. With no NHL to watch I wasn't sure what to do so I started watching live streams of some KHL games online. Naturally, I found myself pulling for SKA St. Petersburg as that is where Bobrovsky signed during the lockout. It was funny to see Bob no longer wearing the Orange and Black of a Flyers sweater but it was great to be able to see a hockey game again. Bobrovsky was playing phenomenally for SKA and was just amazing in the net racking up win after win. It was then that I realized it didn't matter which team Bob played for, I was a fan no matter what. Bob and SKA made my Columbus crossroads issue disappear completely.

Now we are back at current time with the 12-13 Season just getting under way and Bob is at a new home in Columbus. Man how I had waited to see Bob back on NHL ice and the season opener for Columbus couldn't have been better, Bob looked stellar in the net all night long and would ultimately go on to win the game in a shootout. Watching and cheering Bob in the Columbus game reassured me that my fascination with him was alive and well again. With the season underway, I now find myself sitting with a pair of tickets for the Columbus vs. Detroit game in Columbus next month as I have planned a road trip to hopefully watch Bob live in person for the first time, now I just have to hope he gets the start.

That's the story of how I found my favorite player and how he has helped me find an even greater passion in the world of collecting. It may not be the greatest or most interesting Hockey story ever told but it will always be my favorite story. LET'S GO BOB!!!!





My History of Parallel Sets By Allan Alexander aka HockeyCardsPlus

This is my tale of the history in my eyes of the revolution of the parallel set. I have been a collector since I was around nine years old. I was really never interested in collecting a certain player or team, I enjoyed them all. Then along came 1994 and Pinnacle released its parallel set, Museum Collection, into that year's baseball cards. I was hooked. I guess it was the starburst effect that really caught my eye with these. I tried to put the set together as well as the Artist Proofs set, but there were just too many cards for me. The irony here is that I ended up doing the 1994-95 Pinnacle Rink Collection set which was 539 cards; some of which I am still missing as they were only attainable through redemption. For me the challenge of finding all the parallels for a set is what makes it fun and enjoyable.

The next few years I tried collecting a few other parallel sets. I tried 1996-97 Leaf Press Proofs, but they just didn't really hold my interest enough to finish pursuing it. I also tried 1997-98 Donruss Silver and Gold Press Proofs and even with them holding my interest a little more, I just couldn't manufacture the will to keep collecting them. Around that time, I struggled with collecting in general and even with my love of it. I was having a hard time enjoying it. I even flirted with the 1998-99 SPx Finite Spectrum set but gave up faced with the impossibility of getting all the 1/1's.

The 2002-03 Atomic set more than rejuvenated my love of collecting and of the parallel set. The cards were a beautiful die-cut design and with the smaller set size (125), the parallels did not seem like an impossible challenge. I tried all four of the parallels to the base set; gold/99, blue/150, red /125, hobby/775. Although the hobby set was the only one I finished, I enjoyed them immensely. Sadly the next 4-5 years I was busy in a new job and left the collecting hobby for the most part.

In 2009 I returned to the hobby I had loved for so long. I started the year acquiring 2009-10 Certified Fabric of the Game NHL Die Cuts /10. It was a beautiful set and I came about ten cards from completing it when I started to go through some layoff time at work and had to abandon it. I really wish I could have finished that set as all the ones I had received were really sick patches, it would have been my masterpiece. My next move was to find a set I could hopefully put together, and wasn't too costly. There were enough made that it wouldn't be an extreme task. The NHL Die-Cuts from Certified, were so short printed that when you saw one on eBay or wherever you had to grab it, and even with the limited number it was not too difficult just very costly.



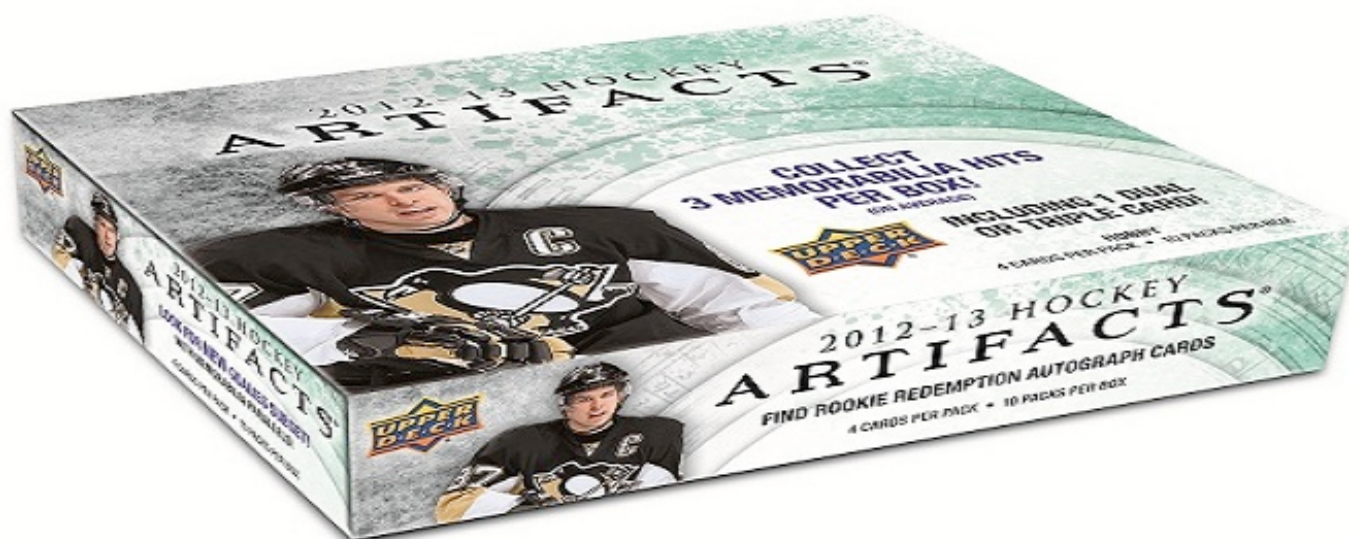
Then, along came 2011-12 Artifacts. Once I had seen this set, I was instantly in love. It was beautiful and it reminded me of the feeling I had when I first saw the 2002-03 Atomic cards. I loved all the different choices of parallel sets, and so I had to decide which one was the best fit for me. I decided I would try the jersey parallels but only if the two jersey pieces were different colors on each card and none of the two were white. I also decided to try the horizontal jersey patch emeralds and the regular jersey patch emeralds. The horizontal started to prove to be costly and it proved to be difficult to find dual jerseys ones that matched my criteria. The regular jersey patch emerald ended up being the one I stuck with and eventually made it to only two short of the set. The next few months yielded no progress and with 2012-13 Artifacts getting ready to be released and viewing the checklist (Gretzky in it), I decided all the ones from the previous year would go a long



way to helping me do the 2012-13 set with hopefully very little monetary investment. In hindsight part of me wishes I would have finished the 2011-12 set, but I will finish this year's version. The set from this year is 140 cards deep and I have 106 of them to date. I am hoping that Upper Deck includes other national team jersey patches next year like they did with Team Canada this time around. I think it would be really nice to see some of the jersey patch pieces from other countries in this set.



This has been a lovely ride going through all these parallel sets and reflecting back on how I got to be where I am today. This has brought back so many memories of all the sets I have tried to complete. I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I enjoyed reflecting back on how these cards have changed and evolved.





Treuve d'émotions! Par Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

Tout d'abord, mes excuses je semble être d'une humeur éditorial ces jours-ci... J'ai de la difficulté à comprendre ce qui se passe parfois et j'aimerais bien qu'on m'éclaire... Je m'explique, il y a à peine un mois, tout ce dont on parlait et on entendait parler, c'était l'argent... le partage de revenue, le rachat de contrat et les fonds de pension... On s'entend qu'on en avait tous marre non? Ça devenait sérieusement décourageant d'ouvrir la section des sports du journal.

Maintenant que toutes les histoires de conventions collectives sont réglé et que, comble du bonheur, le dossier Subban est aussi réglé, qu'est-ce qui défraye les manchettes? Le fait que René Bourque ait découvert ce qu'est un deuxième effort? L'émergence de toutes ces jeunes recrues dans la LNH? Le début de saison canon du CH? Oui, ce sont des sujets mentionnés mais hier, pendant l'avant-match deux des experts de RDS s'étaient trouvé une nouvelle raison de chialer... Quoi donc? Et oui, je vous le donne en mille; le triple-low five. Le pauvre P.K. n'a pas encore eu la chance de jouer avec ses coéquipiers qu'on est déjà sur son dos...



Remarquez, la semaine dernière, c'est sur le dos de Nail Yakupov que les vautours se sont acharnés pour

une célébration dite excessive....Maintenant, voici ce que je ne comprends pas. Tous autant que nous sommes et j'inclus les journalistes ici, nous en avons ras-le-bol d'entendre parler d'argent, nous attendions tous le retour de la LNH et le retour des matchs qui signifient quelque chose pour nous.

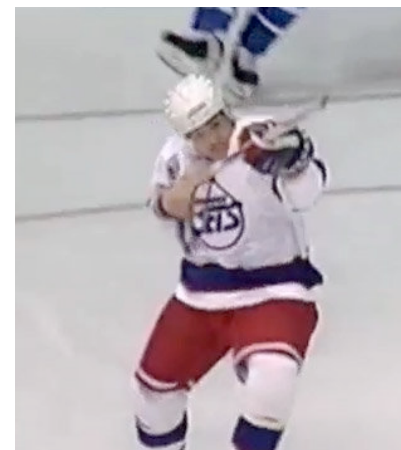
Nous voulons que le sport veuille dire quelque chose, nous voulons voir des efforts déployés sans limite, nous voulons ressentir les matchs pas seulement les voir! Si, comme dans le video, nous avons le droit de célébrer notre joie de façon exubérante lorsque nos favoris marquent un but, pourquoi est-ce que l'auteur du but en question devrait se passer de célébrer?

Est-ce que quelqu'un s'est plaint lorsque Sidney Crosby a jeté ses gants en l'air en célébrant son but aux Olympiques? Ah c'est différent vous me dites? C'était pour la médaille d'or? Ahhhhh et moi qui pensait qu'on voulait que nos joueurs soient aussi impliqués et dévoués à chaque match, qu'ils s'investissent et se défoncent pour chaque victoire! C'est ce que nous voulons? Alors dans ce cas-là, peut-on vraiment leur reprocher d'être passionné?





Personnellement, je trouve que c'est de toute beauté de voir un joueur célébrer un but, que ce soit dans un match de saison régulière, en séries ou pour son premier but en carrière. S'il est heureux, qu'il le montre! Il en a bien le droit! Et ça démontre en plus qu'il aime ce qu'il fait et qu'il ne le fait pas seulement pour l'argent (j'ai peut-être des doutes concernant Evander Kane considérant ses choix de photos sur Tweeter mais bon...ce sera pour un autre billet).



Quant au Triple-low five, je ne vois pas où est le problème...Si on peut être content d'avoir marqué on peut certainement aussi être content d'avoir gagné. Et non, je ne crois pas que Subban le fasse pour attirer les projecteurs...Les sportifs sont superstitieux c'est bien connu. Est-ce possible que pour lui se soit un rituel chanceux? Moi je préfère lui donner le bénéfice du doute et de toute façon, à mon sens, les partisans aiment bien ce rituel (en me basant sur mon entourage bien sûr, si vous n'êtes pas d'accord vous saurez bien me le dire). Personnellement, quand je jouais au handball AAA et que nous remportions la victoire, on ne se gênait pas pour célébrer. De la façon dont je vois ça, c'est le droit du gagnant. Tant que la célébration n'est pas de se diriger vers l'équipe adverse pour les narguer, je ne vois pas où est le mal...

Et vous, qu'en pensez-vous?

