

COLLECTORS CORNER

SEPTEMBER 2013



**ARM'S RACE:
A 2013 NFL SEASON PREVIEW**



KICKOFF

2013

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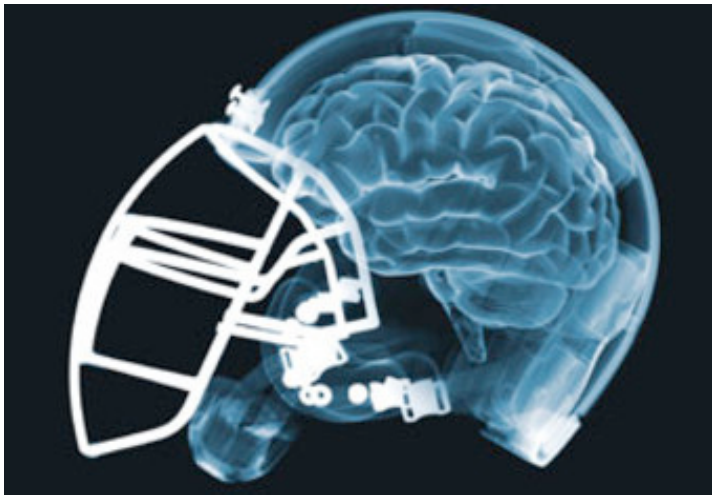
Back in Action

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

There we are, the NFL is finally back in action and not a second too soon! In fact, it was 45 minutes late as the season kickoff was delayed for 45 minutes in typical Denver fashion. However, it was truly worth the wait as once again Peyton Manning demonstrated that just like wine, he gets even better with age. The Broncos took their time and were led by 3 at half time but after that, they never looked back. Manning (the eldest) threw 7 touchdown passes and led his team to a 49-27 blowout of the reigning Super Bowl champions; the Ravens.

This is not the only thing making the headline in football this week though as the class action lawsuit filed by

formed players against the NFL has been settled. Yes, the NFL decided to buy peace. In all, the bill came to 765 millions...that's a huge figure! Do not get me wrong, I'm happy for the former players and yes head injuries are a very serious issue in the game. It got me thinking though; had it gone to trial, would the players have been able to prove that the NFL did indeed hide the dreadful effects of concussions to its players? Was it about hiding the effects or was it rather that back then, the effects were not so well known? I perfectly understand that the league wanted to settle the lawsuit in order to be seen to take care of their former players and to protect its image.



What does this mean for the future though? Concussions are still happening at an alarming rate and while the league tries to invest in better equipment and change its rules to ensure players' safety, the fans are complaining that the sport is getting too soft and that the National Football League is rapidly becoming the Flag Football League. Furthermore, now that the effect of concussions are better known, what happens of the risk acceptance principles? If the League, the fans and the players now know about concussions' effects, it's hard to claim damages for taking part in an activity the risks of which you were fully aware of. Time will tell what will happen but keep in mind that Obama recently said: "I wouldn't want my kids to play football, it's way too dangerous"... Should more people take that stance, what would become of the game?

If the NFL wants to keep going on business as usual, it may be worth Roger Goodell & Co. thinking ahead of time and creating a fund to assist in players' treatment post retirement. Why wait for complaints you know will be coming... If you truly want to keep your image untarnished, be proactive about the issue and tell your players: We're aware of this issue, we're with you and we'll do our best to help you. Just an idea...but for now, let's just all enjoy the 2013 season and see if the Niners can make it back to the Super Bowl final and if the Ravens will again meet them there among other things...



Arms Race: The Greatest Era of Quarterbacks in NFL History

By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert

It's a bold statement, I know. Our fathers and purists may both disagree. One thing is quite clear, however; the NFL quarterbacking class of 2013 is the greatest in the history of the league. No qualifiers, no questions, no dispute. Period. Yes, 1998 was great, and very well may be the next greatest season on the list. The cream of the crop, Brett Favre, John Elway, Steve Young, Dan Marino, Troy Aikman, and a rookie Peyton Manning, is as good as it gets. However, I doubt that fans were particularly excited to have Donald Hollas, Craig Whelihan, Charlie Batch, Danny Kanell, Tony Banks, Neil O'Donnell or Erik Kramer leading their teams on to the field week after week. The bottom of the pack just wasn't as good as the bottom of the pack in 2013.



By my accounts, of the 32 teams in the NFL, just three have a quarterback that fans should have few reasons to be optimistic about. Three. So with all due respect to fans of the Vikings (Christian Ponder), Browns (Brandon Weeden), and the Jaguars (Blaine Gabbert), I would like to welcome the rest of you to the Great Arms Race of 2013.



It cannot be disputed that three current signal callers are already on or near the top of the list of all-time great quarterbacks: Tom Brady, Peyton Manning, and Drew Brees. By the end of this season, all 3 will be among the top 6 all-time in yards, completions, and touchdowns, if they aren't already. All 3 have a Super Bowl win, multiple awards, and careers that need no defending.

The next tier of quarterbacks, playing in any other era, would be regarded as the best of a generation, but because they play in the shadow of those three greats, get a little less respect than they may deserve. Aaron Rodgers, Eli Manning

and Ben Roethlisberger are proven winners who have also put up spectacular numbers in their still-young careers. Roethlisberger and the youngest Manning both have 2 rings each, the latter being named MVP in both of his Super Bowl win. Rodgers has one, too, along with a Super Bowl MVP of his own. Rodgers is the only one of the three, however, with an AP MVP trophy, too.

That's six down, but still 23 to go! There is the next level of quarterbacks, a bit younger and less proven than our last three, but none less talented. Led by Joe Flacco, last year's Super Bowl MVP, these are the next to make the elite class, perhaps with a bit more





seasoning and a lucky break or two. Matt Ryan, Matthew Stafford, Philip Rivers, and Matt Schaub are one Super Bowl



away from being considered legitimate, elite-level QBs. Flacco is Baltimore's all-time leader in every major category. Ditto for Schaub and the Houston Texans record book. Ryan, Stafford, and Rivers sit behind Bartkowski, Layne, and Fouts, three franchise icons that they will soon pass themselves. If any of them make a deep playoff run in 2013, it will be yet another reason for them to be considered among the game's best.

There are four quarterbacks that, for one reason or another, their fans love to hate them, despite solid stats and good resumes. While Cowboys fans still doubt that Tony Romo can



win the big one, his numbers put him at or near the top of the franchise register, including more touchdowns than anyone to wear the blue star. He also has the only four (!) 4,000 yard seasons in Dallas history. Chicago's all-time leader in 4th quarter comebacks and game winning drives? Jay Cutler. Still, fans in Chicago seem ready to ride him out of town at the first opportunity. Already Tampa's leader in TDs, this season should find Josh Freeman taking top spot of the rest of Tampa Bay's quarterbacking lists. Having made a 3-game improvement over last year while setting career highs in yards and TDs, Tampa's future looks to be in good hands. Finally, there is the enigmatic but immensely talented Michael Vick. Off-the-field events aside, Vick is one of the more uniquely talented men in NFL history. More rushing yards than Gale Sayers, Mike Alstott, Christian Okoye, Lenny Moore, and Jamal Anderson. More touchdowns than Robert Smith or Marion Motley. The all-time leader in rushing yards by a QB and yards per carry. Yet Vick still struggles to prove himself. A new, more open offense under new head coach Chip Kelly should allow Vick to again showcase his skills.

There are two quarterbacks that, while they may not be flashy and exciting, certainly provide better options for their franchise than in seasons past. Arizona fans may want to turn their heads for this part. Ryan Lindley, Brian Hoyer,



Kevin Kolb, Derek Anderson, John Skelton, Max Hall, and Richard Bartel all threw passes for Arizona in the last three seasons, leading to an 18-30 record. With the addition of Carson Palmer, the owner of the 10th highest average passing yards per game in NFL history, Larry Fitzgerald and Michael Floyd finally have the big-armed QB Arizona has been craving since the retirement of Kurt Warner. The curious case of Alex Smith enters a new setting, with Smith taking his talents to Kansas City. Despite a 19-5-1 record, a 95.1 rating, and a TD-INT ratio of 3-1, San Francisco was only big enough for one QB, and he wasn't it. He may be just the tonic for a team that has gone 9-23 in its last 32 games.



Finally, there is the new class, quarterbacks drafted since 2010, full of potential, skill, and each armed with a unique skill set, ready to lead their respective franchises to greatness. The class of 2013 looks promising, but is far less heralded than the two classes prior. E.J. Manuel and Geno Smith both seem to have won their jobs by default and injury. If anything, they are someone shiny and new for fans in win-starved New York to put their hope in.

The 2012 draft class may very well go down as one of the best ever. Robert Griffin III (as well as backup Kirk Cousins) has energized the fan base in Washington, and hopes to lead them to their first Super Bowl in two decades. Replacing a legend is always tough, but Indy's Andrew Luck has done all he can to win games and fans. Russell Wilson's maturity and skill have fans in the Great Northwest clamoring for a deep playoff push this season. Ryan Tannehill may not be the second coming of Dan the Man, but he has given fans in Miami reason to hope again after seasons of Chad Henne and Matt Moore.



2011 brought about another mercurial talent in Cam Newton. He owns the most passing yards in NFL history in a QB's first two years, and has rushed for an incredible 22 touchdowns in that span.



The Red Rocket, Andy Dalton, has lifted the Bengals to a legitimate contender, bringing back memories of greats Boomer Esiason and Ken Anderson. The training wheels are finally off for Jake Locker in Tennessee, with Matt Hasselbeck in Indy. It will be up to him to lead the franchise to their first long playoff run in a decade. A supplemental draft pick, Terrelle Pryor looks to beat out Matt Flynn and take the reins for the Silver and Black. His combination of size, speed, and rocket arm has fans in Oakland ready to cheer. Perhaps the best of the class could come from San Francisco, in last year's Super Bowl runner up, Colin Kaepernick. The 49ers seem to be the front runner in 2013, led by the signal caller many are comparing to HOFer Steve Young.

Finally, there is 2010's golden boy, Sam Bradford of the St. Louis Rams. Despite playing in what could be the NFL's toughest division, Bradford parlayed an excellent second half of 2012 into a near .500 record, and looks to contend for a playoff berth again in 2013.

The game has certainly changed into a wide open aerial attack, and if these quarterbacks have anything to say about it, 2013 is shaping up to be the most prolific passing season in the history of the National Football League.



Is a 32-Team NHL a Viable Option? By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

During the course of Gary Bettman's term as the commissioner of the National Hockey League, the game's greatest professional league has enjoyed tremendous growth. The number of teams has expanded to thirty, and the League's increased revenues have skyrocketed to make the NHL a multi-billion dollar operation. The overall marketing of the game has grown significantly to include numerous television and merchandising licenses that contribute to the NHL's financial success in many of its key markets. Expansion has taken hockey to many new places and firmly established itself as a North American game under Bettman.

The overall growth of the game however has not meant a smooth and continuous series of success stories. The NHL's second go-around in Atlanta fared poorly, to the extent that the team was moved to Canada to provide for the re-birth of the Winnipeg Jets. Attendance in venues such as Phoenix, Sunrise and Dallas has lagged, allowing many Canadian fans to clamour for a greater focus on growing the game north of the border and giving "traditional" hockey markets an opportunity to grow the game at an even higher rate than it has already enjoyed.

With the NHL's latest reconfiguration of its conference format, there is a clear imbalance in the distribution of its teams. The newly re-arranged Western Conference has two divisions of seven teams, while the Eastern Conference features two divisions with eight teams each. Rather than continue the previous alignment with six divisions of five teams, the NHL created a new arrangement that leaves fans scratching their heads wondering why they didn't simply continue with the previous set-up. Many wonder why Columbus was moved to the East, arguing that it would be a more natural fit in the Central Division of the West. The intent there seems to be banking on the notion that the Blue Jackets fans would turn out in greater numbers to see the Pittsburgh Penguins, the New York Rangers, and the Washington Capitals than they have in past years for the likes of the Dallas Stars and St. Louis Blues.

WESTERN CONFERENCE		EASTERN CONFERENCE	
DIVISION A	DIVISION B	DIVISION C	DIVISION D
 ANA	 CHI	 BOS	 CAR
 CGY	 COL	 BUF	 CBJ
 EDM	 DAL	 DET	 NJD
 LAK	 MIN	 FLA	 NYI
 PHX	 NSH	 MTL	 NYR
 SJS	 STL	 OTT	 PHI
 VAN	 WPG	 TBL	 PIT
		 TOR	 WSH



The seemingly obvious way to restore balance is to have one more round of expansion to bring the NHL to a 32-team league. The formula has worked tremendously for the NFL, which operates using eight divisions of four teams each, and there are no oddball divisional alignments in North America's most successful and profitable sport. That said, is there much more opportunity for growth in the United States for at least one more NHL team? Can it sustain a team that is not a drain on the NHL's revenues? Well, perhaps. But it will be very dependent upon geography—the "Southern strategy" preferred by Bettman to this point has not been a winning formula. A list of the NHL's franchise values and operating income shows that of the bottom ten teams in the League, seven are clubs that are located where they are due to expansion or relocation under Bettman: Anaheim, Tampa Bay, Florida, Nashville, Carolina, Columbus, and Phoenix. Combined, these seven teams operated in the red for the 2011-12 season to the tune of \$88 million. None of these teams contribute revenues to the NHL in excess of \$100 million on an annual basis.

If not in the "non-traditional" area of the southern United States, where then are the prime locations for NHL expansion, should it pursue that route? I would suggest that there should be one more Canadian team and one more American team added. The NHL needs a geographical balance, and for that reason the best choice is to look to the west, specifically the Pacific Northwest. Seattle is a great sports market that would support an NHL franchise, and is certainly close enough to the Canadian border that it will attract fans who want to cheer on their own team in "hostile territory." A geography-based rivalry with the Vancouver Canucks, one of the NHL's premier franchises in terms of attendance, drawing power, and revenues, is natural and easy to market. The city has a proposal on the table for a new \$500 million arena project that would be suitable for both a new NHL team and a return to Seattle of the NBA. All signs point to the deal being approved, and the hope is that "if you build it, they will come." Seattle has a pre-NHL history of supporting professional hockey, and their WHL club, the Seattle Thunderbirds, are a great organization. It is time for Seattle to take that next step.



How, then, does the NHL "Make It Eight" in Canada? There seems to be two main options bandied about on a regular basis: a second team in the Greater Toronto Area or a return to Quebec City. Both options would be a financial goldmine for the NHL. If they want to see revenues grow on a sustainable and fast-tracked basis, Toronto II or Quebec is a sure thing.

The Maple Leafs are the NHL's #1 revenue generator and most highly valued franchise; games are consistently sold out and in an area with a metropolitan population in excess of three million, filling another 18,000+ seat arena would be a breeze. With season tickets for the Leafs a hereditary gift and a years-long wait list, fans would be able to throw their



support (financial and otherwise) to a new club and build their own traditions. The “centre of the hockey universe” would be a prime location for a new team.



When the Nordiques left Quebec City in 1995, the Canadian dollar was at a historic all-time low while salaries were just beginning to skyrocket. It was a small-market club with a small population base and no nearby major city to draw upon additional support. Today, Quebec City has plans in place for a major new arena that ought to be completed by 2015, as well as tremendous corporate support from media magnate Pierre-Karl Peladeau. The “winning conditions” are there for Quebec now whereas they had melted away by 1995. Much like a potential Seattle franchise, a reborn Nordiques club would have a natural rivalry based on geography, that with the Montreal Canadiens. The tremendous cash cow that would be dropped in the League’s lap here is too obvious. The Habs/

Nordiques rivalry was intensely fierce in the 1980s, for a time perhaps even surpassing the Canadiens/Bruins rivalry in terms of the depth of the dislike between the two clubs. On a personal note, I welcome the return of a team to Quebec City so that the “language police” and other media-driven and –influenced elements that have harangued the Canadiens organization in recent years can go back to supporting the Nordiques and allow the Habs to focus on winning Stanley Cups.

Whether the NHL decides to eventually expand into Toronto II or Quebec City, that will again put the team in a conference imbalance, requiring one team to have its affiliation switched to the Western Conference. Columbus, having just moved over to the East, would be the most likely candidate for a return. They would probably not appreciate being juggled back and forth, having just lobbied so hard to be moved into a conference that allows them to host some of the most popular teams in the League. But if it comes down to them or Detroit, the NHL will opt to move the Blue Jackets. Or, the NHL could go outside the box and put the second Toronto franchise in the West. Remember that for many years in the 1990s and early 2000s the Leafs were in the Western Conference, so it’s not an idea without historical foundation.

One can certainly debate the merits of adding another 50 players to the NHL talent pool, to say nothing of the new farm systems that would have to be created. There is already considerable strain on the developmental systems of traditional sources, which has in turn facilitated the growth of the NHL into a global game that collects and attracts talent from all over the world. The Canadian Hockey League, the preferred junior developmental system of the NHL, has taken the step of forbidding non-Canadian goaltenders to be drafted into its ranks in order to allow Canadian youth to develop at the position to earn a chance at the NHL. More pro teams means that there would be greater opportunity for these net minders to live out their dreams as a hockey player. There are already some concerns about ability of the junior ranks to produce legitimate NHL calibre goalies in this country, so while more goalies would have a chance to make the pros, would they really have the potential to equal the level of success and skills of some of today’s current stars?



Those concerns aside, if the NHL decides to grow to a 32-team league, it has amazing potential to generate a significant increase in revenues, and that is what makes the idea so appealing to many people at the head office. There are already forecasts of the salary cap in the 30-team League reaching and exceeding \$80M by the end of this decade—all that will be necessary to make that a reality will be a status quo annual growth of 5 per cent, according to the Globe & Mail's James Mirtle. A super-injection of new revenue provided by successful launches of new teams in Seattle and Toronto/Quebec City would accelerate that growth. That creates an entirely different set of problems for the less well-off teams in the Sunbelt, who already struggle to reach salary floors, but for the movers and shakers of the NHL, they will always put their own concerns and interests ahead of the likes of their

ownership brethren.

In conclusion, a 32-team NHL makes sense, would be viable, would be practical, and would give new opportunities for television revenue and expanding the fan base while also strengthening the casual fan base of the game in those markets receiving new clubs. While one may not approve of Gary Bettman and the manner in which he conducts his business, there is no denying that his management of the NHL has taken it to new heights. Should he be in search of a final “legacy project” before turning over the reins as commissioner to another individual, a final round of expansion is the most sensible endeavour he could undertake.





Around the Rink
By RGM81 aka Richard McAdam

September – the days are getting a little shorter, the temperatures are a little cooler, the skies become a little greyer, and the kids are back to school. That's all fine, but the best thing about September for a hockey fan is that it signals the return of the NHL! Training camps will be opening up across North America within the next two weeks with the first exhibitions games soon to follow. The feeling and the buzz in the air is certainly more optimistic and hopeful than it was a year ago at this time. These are the happy times!

A lot has changed in the makeup and appearance of the NHL over the course of the summer. Fortunately we've provided a solid primer of all the off-season changes to help people get up to speed on key free agent signings, departures, and of course the overhaul of the conference format. It's not going to be as in-depth as what you'll get from The Hockey News or other fine publications, but it will give the reader an opportunity to see which players have put on new jerseys and made their bank accounts a little more stocked.

Before the players take to the ice with their respective clubs there has been other action happening that is worth discussing in some detail. The first is of course the series of Olympic orientation camps taking place around the world. With NHL participation in the Sochi Games finally confirmed, the world's best players gathered in late August to get acquainted and begin the process of determining who will get to represent their country on the global stage. For one player, a certain Carey Price, the camp served as a makeshift honeymoon as he had gotten married to his longtime partner only the day before the camp. Fortunately, Price's friend and Canadiens teammate P.K. Subban was able to provide assurance to fans out there that Carey was able to get at least some sleep.



Carey Price catches up on sleep the morning after his wedding while en route to Calgary for the Team Canada Orientation Camp.

While at camp, the Canadian hopefuls never actually took to the ice due to insurance issues. The cost of insuring over \$1 billion in player contracts exceeded a million dollars, and Hockey Canada deemed that to be prohibitive in light of the



need to fund programs across the country. So the players enjoyed some ball hockey and other non-skating drills and discussion sessions for the two-day event instead. The speculation has already begun as to the final rosters and it will be up to them as individuals to make their own respective cases once the NHL season begins in October. I have a list of favourites for myself as to who I would like to see at the Olympics, none ranked higher of course than #31 for the Montreal Canadiens getting to represent his country for the first time since the 2007 World Junior Championships in Sweden.

Finally, Upper Deck and Panini conducted the annual Rookie Showcase last month. This event is the first major gathering of all of the players who will comprise the second part of the much-discussed Double Rookie Class that will be featured in all 2013-14 products from the two companies. Players are put through the paces of autograph sessions, on-ice drills for photography, and other events that will eventually end up being immortalized on cardboard for collectors to enjoy. Surprisingly Upper Deck has not yet posted their recap of the event, but Panini has done a great job putting together a pair of videos and an extensive photo gallery of the two-day event – fans can check that out here: <https://paniniamerica.wordpress.com/2013/08/29/video-gallery-panini-americas-must-see-recap-of-the-2013-nhlpa-rookie-showcase/> and get their first glimpses at the likes of Nathan MacKinnon, Jonathan Drouin, and Malcolm Subban in their NHL photoshoot jerseys. As you can see from the picture below, there was even a “special guest” appearance by Canadiens forward Brendan Gallagher, who attended this event despite making his debut in the 2013 season. Gallagher features heavily in the 2013-14 DRC so his attendance gives Panini and UD the opportunity to get even more photos and autographs of the young Habs sniper.



Canadiens rookies Brendan Gallagher and Christian Thomas show off their sketch cards at the Rookie Showcase

That’s all the news fit to print from the hockey boards this month. Keep your eyes peeled on the forums as we prepare our latest annual season-long contest and other great discussion topics!



Baseball's First 6-Tool Player By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert



I know, I know. I am really reaching with this article. After the August this kid just had, I can't hold it in any longer. Mike Trout is just incredible.

Scouts and experts throw the term "5-tool" player around quite a bit, often even if a player exhibits potential in a tool or two. The five tools, of course, are the ability to hit for average, hit for power, speed and smart base running, good fielding, and a solid arm.

I would like to assert that we need a new term for Trout. Trout has a sixth tool that is much rarer than

any of the other five already defined. He has the coveted sixth tool, professionalism. Mike Trout is baseball's first, true 6-tool superstar.

Trout's team, the Angels, have been out of it since the first month of the season. For the second straight year, the Angels' slow start out of the gate cost them dearly, and this year, they never recovered. A 9-17 start doomed them, as well as their record of 6-19 vs. division foes Oakland and Texas through September 1. That does not spell success. Some might say it could be karma, the universe's way of getting back at the franchise for not taking care of the new cornerstone of their franchise when they had a chance. Instead of doing Trout a solid and giving him at least some sort of a raise after a season in which he set a new franchise record for runs scored and WAR, 10.9, a full 2.6 points better than anyone to ever don the Angels uniform, and the most in the majors since 1991, excluding the steroid-filled Barry Bonds, they chose the cheap way out. They picked up his option, rather than pay him one dollar more.

Think about this, for just a bit: Mike Trout's salary, \$510,000, accounts for exactly .36% of the Angels 2013 salary. Not 36%, or 3.6%. Nope, about one-third of one percent. They are paying \$3.5 million to Ryan Madson, who will never throw a pitch for the franchise. Joe Blanton, currently sporting a 2-14 record as a pitcher, will make \$6.5 million this season.

The majority of players faced with those first two issues, a team in the tank and little money in the bank, would hardly find the motivation to keep things going throughout the long, arduous 162-game marathon. What made it even tougher on Trout was the disappearance of Josh Hamilton, the injuries to Howie Kendrick and Albert Pujols, no other protection in the lineup, and the back end of the rotation that resembled batting practice more than it did a starting rotation.

For a young kid, an absolute phenom with the world on a platter, barely 21, it would have been very easy to just go through the motions, play out the season, and get a mega-contract based on potential of what could be for the next 10-15 years. Somehow, however, Trout found a way to drive his value further skyward. When it mattered least, when the fans cared least, when it has been the hardest to do so, the incomparable Trout got better.



First, let's look at this past month, August. At the end of the month, the Angels sat 16.5 games back. They fell as far as 18.5 back in the month, and were a season worst 16 games under .500 at one point. With no Pujols in the lineup, and a slumping Josh Hamilton barely returning to form, pitchers had very little reason to pitch to Trout. What numbers did he put up? Oh boy... I thought it was a misprint when I first read it. An OBP of .500? One of every two PA's, he got on? Simply unbelievable. .500!!! He walked more times than any other AL player in the month (more on why that's significant later), and far, far more times than those you might imagine: Chris Davis, Miguel Cabrera, David Ortiz, etc. He hit .337 for the month, too, scoring 19 runs, hitting as many HRs as he stole bases, six each, and continued to play stellar outfield; So much for mailing it in towards the end of the season.

Mike Trout's 2012 season will go down as one of the finest rookie seasons in MLB history. League leading totals in runs (129), stolen bases (49), and OPS+ (168), while hitting .326 with 30 HRs and getting on base at a .399 clip. Great numbers, no matter how you break them down. Despite such accomplishments, Trout is actually having a much better 2013, at the ripe old age of 21.

Though he has played in 8 fewer games thus far, some of his totals already eclipse his 2012 end-of-the-year marks! In 40 fewer PA's, he already has 8 more doubles, one more triple, and 15 more walks. He is just one RBI behind last year's total, and is striking out less while getting on more. His current OBP, .431, is 32 points higher than last season, and his AVG and SLG numbers are higher, too. He's becoming not just a fearsome hitter, but the most well-rounded hitter in the game.

In the shadow of Miguel Cabrera's triple crown chase, Chris Davis' monster home runs, and Alex Rodriguez's steroid cloud, casual observers may be missing out on the best player in the game, a 21-year old superstar toiling away on the wrong coast, in the wrong city for many to take notice. I would bet a large sum of money, however, say... \$510,000, that Trout's agent and the Angels' front office know exactly what baseball's most talented player has been up to. Maybe they should have rewarded him before he became baseball's first 6-tool superstar.





Auto Racing's Busts

By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy



What defines a sports bust? It holds a different definition to people. Some busts have productive careers but are still considered busts simply due to who else was available. Every sport has those players and athletes with the unlimited potential in college or high school. Some like a LeBron James or Kobe Bryant turn out to be among the 10 best of all-time in their sport while others are simply remembered for being drafted ahead of the future hall of famers-see Greg Oden, Darko Milicic, and Sam Bowie as famous examples in basketball. For the sake of this conversation a bust will be defined as someone who made it to the top and just never met their expectations. Auto racing is a sport predicated on both talent as well as the ability to be marketable and bring money and sponsorship with

you. In order to get to the top you need these things but to stay there talent prevails. Busts in auto racing are well known to some and not as much to others. Uniquely some of auto racing's busts were busts because they died way too young before their potential was reached. For the purpose of this article those that died in a racecar like Adam Petty and Kenny Irwin-who were stars destined for greatness only to be killed before their true potential was ever seen-will not be considered busts. Busts are those drivers who lit up lower level series, made it to the top, and flamed out or were unfortunately derailed for various reasons. Here are 10 that stand out.

1. **Lloyd Seay**- okay most people do not know who this guy is but they truly should. Seay was Nascar's first superstar before Nascar-if that makes any sense. Described by Nascar founder Bill France Sr. as "the best pure driver I ever saw" Seay was a known moonshine runner from Georgia and started his racing career in the late 1930's at the treacherous Lakewood Speedway. Seay won his first race driving for cousin Raymond Parks (the man who owned Nascar's first championship car in 1949). The 18 year-old Seay was a natural and over the course of the next three years he dominated every stock car race in the area all the while avoiding the law. Seay was on a hot streak in 1941 having won 3 races over the last 15 days when a senseless tragedy occurred. Seay's cousin Woodrow Anderson had a major disagreement with Seay over the moonshine account and their business and shot the rising star dead on September 1st, 1941 in a senseless act. Seay died 9 years before Nascar came to be known-but he was stock car racing's first star. There is no doubt he would have done great things and perhaps been Nascar's first champion in 1949. Seay was inducted into the Georgia auto racing Hall of Fame in 2002.
2. **Casey Atwood**-A true Nascar flameout if there ever was one Atwood was in 1999 the next big thing. Tagged as Nascar's next Jeff Gordon Atwood became the youngest pole winner in Nascar Busch Series history and the youngest race winner which stood until Joey Logano eclipsed him years later. Atwood was young and talented. Dodge was making it's reentry in Nascar in 2000 and Atwood was tapped to drive for their main team, headed by Jeff Gordon's former crew chief Ray Evernham. Driving alongside future Nascar Hall of Famer Bill Elliott, Atwood got outperformed by his teammate consistently and within 3 years was dumped in favor of Jeremy Mayfield. Atwood ran in the Busch Series for a few more



years before getting canned as teams closed up shops. The 32 year old is currently a free agent and part time late model driver.

3. **Blake Feese**-Blake Feese was an up and coming sprint car talent and second generation racer. His success in Sprint cars reminded many of a young Jeff Gordon or Kasey Kahne. Feese had the opportunity of a lifetime in 2005 as he was part of Rick Hendrick's driver development program in the Busch Series after showing promise for the car owner in ARCA and lower series. In 2005 when given his chance Feese struggled mightily crashing out and getting outperformed badly by fellow young gun and teammate Kyle Busch. At the end of 2005 Hendrick released Feese from his contract. By 2007 he was back racing at his local track and has not been heard from in Nascar since.
4. **Kyle Krisiloff**-Kyle Krisiloff had the pedigree to be great. The son of a racer and the grandson of Mari Hulman George (chair of Indianapolis Motor Speedway) Krisiloff dominated in quarter midgets from a young age and soon found himself on the fast track. As with Blake Feese Krisiloff was given a part-time opportunity with Hendrick Motorsports and their development program but quickly flamed out. He was released and found himself bouncing around other midpack rides in Nascar's Busch Series all the while getting outperformed by fellow teammates. Krisiloff has not been heard from since 2007.
5. **Erik Darnell**-In 2005 Erik Darnell joined Jack Roush's driver development program after co-winning Roush's ever famous driver contest-the gong show. Darnell experienced modest success in Nascar's truck series for Jack Roush but his fellow co gong show winner David Ragan made far greater leaps undermining Darnell's progress. Darnell won one race in a photo finish at Michigan at 2008 but was soon released due to a lack of sponsorship. Darnell is still in Nascar today-albeit driving for Nationwide series start and park team Key Motorsports. Another one who never made it.
6. **Kerry Earnhardt**-The son of Dale Earnhardt had the last name. For whatever reason Kerry Earnhardt's Nascar career just never materialized. Whereas stepbrother Dale Jr. has had a very successful Nascar career Kerry instead flamed out and as of today is now focusing on his son Jeffrey's up and coming racing career. Kerry's is probably the most mysterious case of all racing busts.
7. **Loy Allen Jr.**-In 1994 rookie Loy Allen Jr. was tagged to drive the #19 Hooters Ford and compete for Nascar's rookie of the year in the Cup Series. The relative unknown set the world on fire immediately winning the pole for the Daytona 500 and proving himself throughout the year to be a spectacular qualifier. Allen had potential but his team had monetary problems-preventing him from truly competing on a regular basis for the Rookie of the Year. Allen would get various opportunities over the next 2 to 3 years before a neck injury at Rockingham further derailed his career. He retired from racing in 1999.
8. **Buckshot Jones**-In the mid 1990's Roy "Buckshot" Jones was succeeding in Nascar's Busch Series winning races and even winning the most popular driver award in 1998. Jones ascended to the Cup Series in 1999 with much potential and fanfare. Jones failed to qualify for the first two races and over the next 7



when he did make them usually crashed out. Jones quickly returned to the Busch Series. He would get one more Cup opportunity in 2001 but it ended with similar results. Jones retired altogether from racing in 2007.

9. **Shinji Nakano**-In 1998 Toyota was entering Formula 1 and they wanted a Japanese driver. They tagged Shinji Nakano to drive their entry and gave him an opportunity to fill the seat in order to please their Japanese fan base and their bosses. Nakano however got destroyed by his much faster teammates Olivier Panis and Jarno Trulli who won the driving jobs. Nakano made sporadic starts and test drove but his F1 career never materialized into anything.
10. **Luca Badoer**-Despite being a F1 flameout Badoer is still considered a great driver and has probably the best current job of anyone on this list-he is a full time test driver for Ferrari. Badoer's F1 career was lengthy and he ran solidly for many different teams along the way however he also holds the distinction of running the most Formula 1 races out of any driver in history to never score a single championship point. This makes him in many ways a racing bust-if you can call anyone who made it to Formula 1 a bust as a racecar driver.

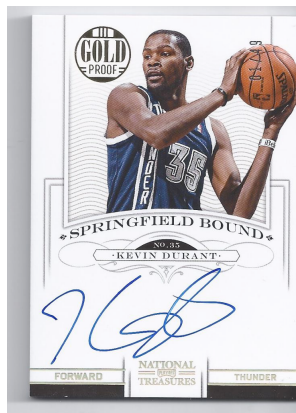




Courtside By Jay Weger aka Jay 520

Box/Pack breaks

Over the span of AuGUst there was only a few products opened which were Panini National Treasures, Flee Retro, Panini Signatures and Elite Series. With the chance of hitting a big money card legend33 got a case to pull these cards: 1/1 Printing Plates of J.J. Redick 12-13 GS, Joakim Noah 12-13 GS, Tyson Chandler 12-13 Select, NBA Gear Triple patch auto of Grant Hill/25, Match Ups dual GU of LeBron/Pierce/99 and Kobe/Durant patches/10, Material Treasures patch of LaMarcus Aldridge/25, 11vs.12 dual auto of Davis/Parsons/10 redemption, Champions Signatures dual auto of Michael Cooper/Byron Scott/25, Springfield Bound auto of Kevin Durant/49, RPA of Jared Sullinger/199 and John Jenkins/25 to go with this sick Marquis Teague 1/1 Logoman auto.



mugmasher got 1 box to hit NBA Gear Triple patch auto of Josh Smith/49, Match Ups dual GU of Durant/Galinari/49, 11vs12 dual auto of Thompson/Barnes/99, RPA of Norris Cole/25 redemption and a sweet Kevin Durant 1/1 base. 13stepper opened 2 cases to get 1/1 printing plates of Fab Melo12-13 GS, Earl Clark 12-13 GS, Kyle Singler12-13 Natl. Treas., Evan Turner 12-13 GS, Terrence Jones12-13 TC, NBA Gear dual GU/auto of Monta Ellis/49, Triple GU auto of Al Horford/49, Triple patch auto of Danny Granger/25, Match Ups dual GU of Howard/Garnet/49 and Dr J/Nique/49, Material Treasures GU of Chris Andersen 3/10 and Anderson Varejao 1/10, Colossal GU of LeBron James/99, Larry Johnson/25 and Vince Carter patch auto/25, RPA of Austin Rivers/199, Jimmy Butler/199, MaRCus Morris/99 and Alexey Shved/25 redemption and lastly an awesome Champions Signatures quad auto of D.Robinson/Olajuwon/B.Russell/R.Parish 1/5!





blacksheep got a box of 12-13 Elite Series to get a RC Incriptions of Austin Rivers redemption, Court Kings auto of Udonis Haslem/249, Electrifying insert of Rajon Rondo/125 and a Kevin Garnett Glass card. Then, blacksheep also broke a box of 12-13 Panini Signatures to get a David Robinson base/25, Ben Hansbrough RC auto/49 and a Harrison Barnes RC auto/10/10! JaMaRChand2012 bought 2 boxes of the same product to pull base/25 of Steve Nash and Chandler Parsons, RC game film autos of GUstavo Ayon/99 and Xavier Henry/5 as well as a Clyde Drexler auto/10!!! Scottish Punk tried Fleer Retro to get inserts of EX MJ and Clyde Drexler Credentials/37, Fleer Legacy Bill Walton/150, Hakeem Olajuwon/100 and Reggie Miller/100, Metal Universe Bill Russell/100, Ultra Platinum Hakeem Olajuwon/100, Z-Force Rave Clyde Drexler/399 with autos of Allan Houston, Fresh Ink Mark Price, Mystique Bob McAdoo and Bernard King. JTfloyd tried a box of 12-13 Select to hit prisms of Kevin Love and Russell Westbrook and then hit gold with a Russell Westbrook Hot Stars gold 6/10 Prizm!!! Biggums7 hit a Maurice Cheeks Silhouette patch auto 6/10 for preferred.

Contests & Winners

In early August we saw jdlee123 guess the correct number in the guess the serial number contest to win 50 CC. The second contest will be up shortly. And again look for more news on the season long contests coming in October.

Hobby News

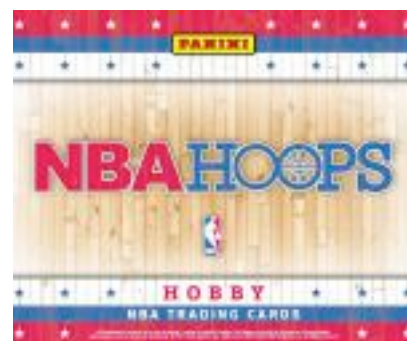


Panini has announced 1 more 12-13 product to hit shelves in mid October. 12-13 Immaculate Collection will be a high-end product boasting with a ton of patches and GU memorabilia. Each box will contain 6 cards for around \$385 to \$450. You will get 1 base /99, 1 RPA /99 or less, 3 memorabilia or autos and 1 additional card per box. What to look for is the **six NBA Logoman Booklet 1/1s**, **Immaculate Caps** – pieces of game-worn hats, **Immaculate Numbers** - acetate cards numbered to players jersey #, **Immaculate Insignias** - featuring team insignia logos, **Immaculate Logos** – patches featuring oversized pieces of Logos, Numbers and Commemorative Patches, **Immaculate Standard** - featuring oversized swatches of the top NBA superstars on the pristine Immaculate acetate. **All-Star Lineage** and **Title Winners** Autographs

will numbered to the amount of times the player has won a title or appeared in a All-Star game.

Now turning to the 13-14 season Panini has NBA Hoops going jumbo. Yeah I said jumbo. In each 13-14 NBA Hoops box will be 500 cards. \$100 for 10 packs per box and 50 cards per pack. You can expect 2 autos, 1 GU, 1 Artist Proof, 50 parallels, 30 Red-back variations, 20 Action Shots, 20 Board Members, 20 Class Action, 20 Court Side and 20 Spark Plugs. Kobes All-Rookie Team will return along with a new Highlights insert featuring top stories from last season.

Also just announced for 13-14 year will be Panini Totally Certified. Look for a late November release date. No price info has been given out yet but expect a 1 auto or 1 GU per pack to return. 300 card base set on the usual Silver, Red, Blue, Gold, Green





and Black parallel. Each parallel will have a GU version also. Rookie Roll Call autos are back to go with new inserts on acetate stock of Ballot Busters, Future Stars, Present Potential and Select Few with each carrying an auto version.

NBA News & Rookie Reviews

By Bryce Doody aka bdoody42

Now that both the Orlando and Las Vegas Summer Leagues have come and gone we have seen what some of this years rookies can do. Below I will be listing the top three players at each position based on what I expect from them this year.

Point guards



1. Michael Carter-Williams

Carter Williams is at all (6-5) point guard whose best ability is to read the floor and pass the ball. Due to his height he can guard the shooting guard position as well. Carter-Williams really needs to work on his shooting ability. Right now teams basically dare him to shoot the ball from outside of fifteen feet. In Philadelphia it looks as if Carter-Williams will be given the reigns to the team from day 1. He should get plenty of playing time and put up solid scoring numbers and good assist numbers. His efficiency will probably leave something to be desired.

2. Trey Burke

Burke was named the National Player of the Year last season. He led the Wolverines to a runner up finish last season. Burke couldn't find the basketball in The Orlando Summer League. In five games he shot 24% from the field and just 5% from the three point line. While no one expects his numbers to remain this low and makes some people wonder how easy his transition will be to the NBA. Burke did a solid job running the team averaging 4 APG compared to just 2.2 TPG. Like Carter-Williams Burke will get playing time from day 1.

3. Dennis Schroeder

Schroeder from Germany is often compared to Rajon Rondo. He is built very similar to Rondo and has a nice all-around game but question marks about his shooting capabilities. Schroeder only shot 34% from the field and 29% from the three point line. Schroeder displays great ball pressure and very active hands. He also did a solid job running the Hawks offense averaging 5.6 APG. He should be a very solid backup to Jeff Teague this season.



Honorable Mention: Ray McCallum and Isaiah Canaan.

Shooting guards

1. Victor Oladipo

Oladipo is an extremely hardworking and athletic 2 guard who should come in and help the Magic from the get go. Oladipo is a defensive menace who is ultra-quick with good defensive instincts. He averaged 3 SPG during the Orlando Summer League. What surprised many people was Oladipo's ability on offense. He averaged 19.0 PPG on 38% but hit



54% of his three pointers. Oladipo spent some time playing the PG position and did a solid job. He averaged 5.0 APG, but also 4.8 TPG. The majority of his minutes will come as a shooting guard. He will probably see starter minutes from the beginning of the season and has a good chance to win Rookie of the Year.



2. Ben McLemore

McLemore maybe the best player this year based on natural ability. He has great shooting form and quick release. He struggled somewhat during summer league just shooting 33% and 19% from deep. Two games he eclipsed the 25 point mark and showed what he can do when he is on. Sacramento is a team in shambles and he should get a lot of playing time from start.

3. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope

Caldwell-Pope is a dead eye outside shooter from deep. He can also get to the rim because defenses need to honor his shooting ability. He will fit in well with Pistons roster need for outside shooting. Caldwell-Pope should be fighting for a starting spot to start the season. Caldwell-Pope has a nice summer league averaging 13.8 PPG.



Honorable Mention: C.J McCollum and Archie Goodwin.

Small Forwards



1. Otto Porter

Porter out of Georgetown will have a chance to start beside John Wall and Bradley Beal. Porter struggled during Summer League shooting 30% from the field and missing all 5 three pointers he took. He did a solid job rebounding averaging 3.7 RPG despite only playing seven minutes one game. His length and defensive ability will help him get court time with the Wizards this season.

2. Reggie Bullock

Bullock is a great piece of the puzzle guy and he should fit in perfectly with the Clippers. Bullock averaged 18.0PPG and 4.2 RPG during the Las Vegas Summer League. Bullock will be the perfect shooter to benefit from a Chris Paul and Blake Griffin pick and roll.

3. Shabazz Muhammad

Muhammad was by many at the start of the season to be a top five pick. Muhammad dropped all the way down to the 14th pick where the Timberwolves selected him. Muhammad is known as a scorer but he struggled during the Las Vegas Summer League. He averaged 8.5PPG on just 37% shooting. Muhammad should be able to find a spot in the Timberwolves rotation.



Honorable mention: Solomon Hill and Glen Rice Jr.



Power Forward



1. Cody Zeller

Many have Zeller listed as a Center, but in Charlotte I feel Al Jefferson will see most of the Center minutes. Zeller has a ton of athleticism and can play both front court positions. Zeller was very aggressive in the Orlando Summer League averaging 16.3 PPG and 9.3 RPG while shooting 52% from the field. Zeller showed a nice face up game attacking slower players. He should get a lot of minutes from the beginning of the season.

2. Anthony Bennett

Out of UNLV, he was the number one pick this year to the surprise of many. Bennett is an extremely talented big who shows great range out to the college three point line. The Cavalier frontcourt is very crowded with Anderson Varejao, Andrew Bynum, Tristan Thompson and Tyler Zeller. If Bennett can lose some weight he can slide over to small forward and earn some minutes. Bennett was unable to participate in summer league due to an injury.



3. Tony Mitchell

This years draft really lacked in power forward talent outside of the two guys listed above/ Mitchell is an amazing athlete much like his teammate Josh Smith. Mitchell has a knack for getting the ball on the offensive glass and he plays all out and is a good defender. He should be a great option to back up Smith and Greg Monroe.

Honorable mention: Jack Cooley.

Centers

1. Kelly Olynyk

Olynyk was outstanding during summer league. He averaged 24.2 MPG and scored 18 PPG. He shot 58% from the field on a variety of outside shots and taking bigger and slower guys off the dribble. He also grabbed 7.8 RPG.

Olynyk isn't a great athlete or considered a tough center but he is extremely versatile. Olynyk should be starting for the Celtics on opening night.



2. Alex Len

Len from Ukraine is a center who hasn't been playing very long, but has a huge amount upside. Len has great touch around the basket and a big burly body. He also displayed a great touch while he was at Maryland he averaged 11.9 PPG to go along with 7.8 RPG. Len is also a very good defender around the basket and can block shots. He averaged 2.1 BPG last season.



3. Noel Nerlens

Nerlens was taken with the sixth pick by the Philadelphia 76ers after a trade with the New Orleans Pelicans. Nerlens Noel tore his ACL last season while he was at Kentucky. The freshman was an absolute monster on defense. He averaged 4.4 BPG in just 31.2 MPG. He also grabbed 9.5RPG. If Nerlens can come back successfully from his surgery he can be the best defensive player in this draft.

Honorable Mention: Steven Adams and Mason Plumlee.

In other NBA news John Wall signs a 5year \$80 million extension to stay with the Washington Wizards. Detroit lands pg Brandon Jennings in a sign and trade deal for 3years and \$25 million. Knee injury riddled former no. 1 pick Greg Oden has come to terms with the Miami Heat in a 2 year deal worth \$2.15 million. Minnesota got its center Nikola Pekovic to resign. Timberwolves made it a priority to get him to stay and now will pay him \$60 million over the next 5 years as they hope to be a contender in the western conference. Aging small forward Antawn Jamison has agreed to sign with the L. A. Clippers. Memphis Grizzlies have released second year center Fab Melo to free up 1.4 million owed to him. The former Celtic came to the Grizz in a trade on 8/15 for Donte Green and cash. Melo's maturity and work ethic were the 2 key components in his trade to Memphis. The Milwaukee Bucks made a couple of moves by receiving SF Caron Butler from the Phoenix Suns for pg Ish Smith and another player and getting pf/c Larry Sanders to resign. Sanders will get \$44 million over the next 4 yrs. The NBA Players Union elected Chris Paul as their new President. Just days into office CP3's agenda is to fight potential HGH testing, eliminate flopping fines and forbid any dress code additions and changes. Tracy McGrady goes on ESPN's "First Take" and announces his retirement from the NBA after 16 years in the leaGUe. Hey guess what? MJ can still dunk at age 50. NBA player Lamar Odom has seemed to hit rock bottom after his wife Khloe Kardashian kicked him out for refusing to go to rehab. Why rehab you ask? Well reports are that Lamar has had a 2 year crack cocaine addiction and her intervention didn't work. And in a 2 day span after that report came out he was arrested for driving under influence in California for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.





SCF Official Review: 2013/14 ITG Decades The 90s

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

1 pack per box

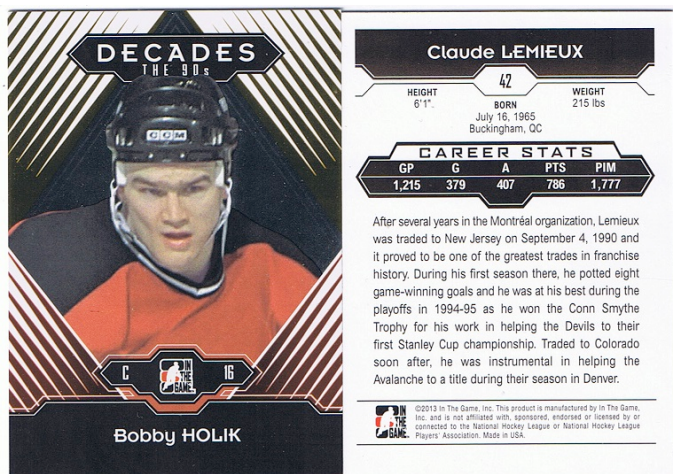
14 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$89.99 - \$104.99



WHAT WE PULLED

Base (6): Bobby Holik, Claude Lemieux, Kris King, Michael Peca, Vincent Damphousse, Jaromir Jagr



Two years ago, ITG unveiled Decades The 80s with a huge success as it centered around the stars who played during that decade. In addition, there was the insertion of a Team USA Autograph Set within the main auto set for the players of the 1980 Gold Medal Team. So ITG has had a release for the 1970s with 1972: The Year In Hockey and the aforementioned 1980s product. Well, the wait is finally over for the fans of the 1990s. If you are into having fun putting a set together, this is one for you. Decades The 90s contains a 200-card base set. However, you only get six cards per box. Each card is on foil board with accentuates the look. There isn't a parallel for the cards (some releases have a silver and gold, sometimes red, version), but there is a nice mix of players, coaches and highlights such as the Cup

Clashes.

Decades Mask (1) - Mike Vernon

Decades Rookie (1) - Arturs Irbe

There are two insert sets, Decades Mask and Decades Rookie. As the name implies, Mask is centered around the net minders of the decade. There are 23 cards in the set. Rookie is a carryover from the 1980s set with the difference being they were used as the "base cards" in the 1980s release. There are 22 cards in the set and each card notates the player's first appearance on the ice in an NHL game. Each box yields two inserts, so typically you will see one of each.





Guy Hebert Autograph



Owen Nolan Autograph



Steve Smith Autograph

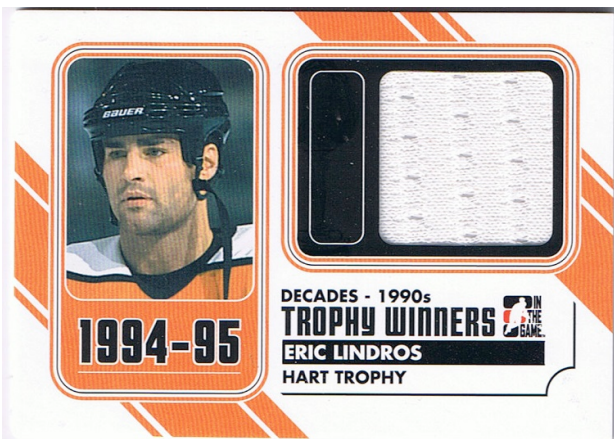


Decades Quad All-Stars Silver Dominik Hasek Jersey/
Owen Nolan Jersey/Theoren Fleury 2-color Jersey/Steve
Yzerman Jersey /30



Game Used Patch Silver Patrick Roy 4-color Patch /3





Trophy Winners Black Eric Lindros Jersey /80

Decades The 90s contains 3 autographs and 3 relics in every box. The Autograph set is huge this year. There are 26 Short Prints on the checklist. In addition, there are 3 Dual Autos and all are Super Short Prints. Oh, I cannot overlook the fact that they are all hard signed! Each box also guarantees a quad relic of some sort. For those used to seeing which version you have listed on the back of the card, it appears you will have to go by the color of the lettering on the front to determine the parallel version you have. The highest you will find throughout the

release is a set numbered to 95 and of course there are versions out there numbered to 1. Did you grow up with hockey in the 90s? This one is for you. Are you a fan of hockey? Then, once again, this one is for you.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 4.5/5

Fun - 4.5/5

Value - 4.5/5

Rebuy - 4.5/5

Overall - 22/25 (88%)

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at In The Game for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all of their products, including print runs and checklists of all the sets in this one, check them out today at www.itgtradingcards.com.



DECADES THE 90s

TEN MEMORABLE YEARS OF HOCKEY

EACH PACK OF DECADES THE 90s CONTAINS

- 3 Hard-Signed Autograph Cards
- 3 Game-Used Memorabilia Cards (One Card is guaranteed to be a Quad Memorabilia Card)
- 2 Non-Memorabilia Insert Cards
- 6 Premium Base Cards

BASE CARDS AND NON-MEMORABILIA INSERT CARDS

The 200-Card checklist will bring back many great memories! Subsets include First Round Pick, Enforcers, Cup Clashes, Dynasty, Decades Player and Decades Coach - all with silver and gold parallels. Not to mention Decades Rookie and Decades Mask Non-Memorabilia Inserts!

HARD-SIGNED AUTOGRAPH CARDS

Over 140 HARD-SIGNED AUTOGRAPHS to collect!

GAME-USED MEMORABILIA CARDS

What better way to re-live one of the best hockey decades than through a fantastic set of Game-Used Memorabilia Cards!

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SCF Official Review: 2013 Panini Momentum By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

10 packs per box

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$169.99 - \$199.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- UNPARALLELED! Every hobby box is loaded with autographs or memorabilia cards!!!
- An astonishing 10 SIGNIFICANT HITS per box with least 5 guaranteed autographs!!!
- Find our unrivaled three-swatch Rookie Signature RPS rookie cards numbered to 399 or less
- Looking to bringing together the best draft classes? Look for CLASS REUNION multi-signed cards numbered to 25 or less
- Back by popular demand! Look for STUDS showcasing an authentic diamond embedded into each insert card
- Momentum returns with its unrivaled three-swatch Rookie Signatures RPS rookie cards. Holographic foil and full-body images give these a fresh look and feel. Numbered to 399 or less
- Look for 10 autograph or memorabilia cards (at least five autographs guaranteed) and 10 Rookie Cards per box.
- Class Reunion Combo/Triple/Quad are multi-signed cards that bring together players drafted from the same year.
- The sparkling Studs insert returns featuring authentic diamonds and the game's biggest, well, studs



PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Momentum returns with its unrivaled three-swatch, autographed rookie cards. Holographic foil and full-body images give these a fresh look and feel. numbered to 399 or less, look for prime parallels as well as an NFL Shield version(with its own unique design).

The class is getting back together! Class Reunion Combo/Triple/Quad are multi-signed cards that bring together players drafted from the same year

Double/Triple Feature Material showcase dynamic duos and trios from your favorite teams. Also find prime versions #'d to 49 or less.

Look for your favorite 2013 rookies in Rookie Team Threads - a multi-swatch insert that also includes prime versions and autographs

Not only are these players studs on the field, they also sport them off the field. Each eye-catching STUDS card contains an authentic diamond



WHAT WE PULLED

Base - 38/100 (38%)

Rookies - 10/100 (10%)

Momentum has a 200-card base set evenly split between veterans and rookies. Players are featured on a white background with an "M" translucently placed in the middle. Rookies fall 1 per pack.

Momentum Gold /99 (1) - Mike Gillislee

Rookie Clear Cut (1)



There are three parallel levels for the base cards: Gold, Platinum and Black as well as the now commonplace printing plates. In addition, each card has a Clear Cut version. Players are featured on an acrylic, see-through card replaces the "M" with the team logo in the background. These are unnumbered.

Cordarelle Patterson RPS Rookie Triple Jersey/Autograph /49

Andre Ellington Rookie Autograph /399





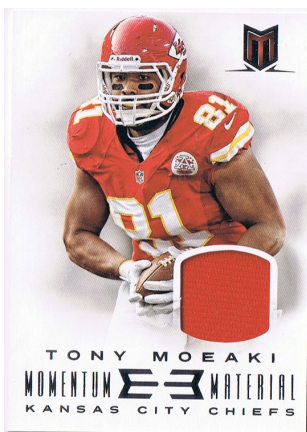
Corey Fuller Rookie Autograph /599



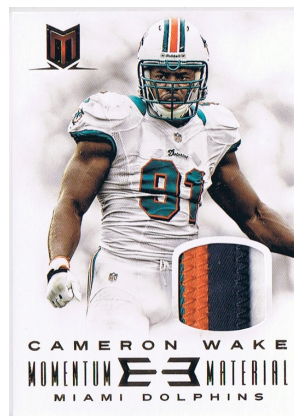
Desmond Trufant Autograph



Momentum Materials Tony Moeaki Jersey /199



Momentum Materials Prime Cameron Wake 4-color Patch /49



Rookie Initiation Onterio McCalebb Autograph /299



Rookie Initiation Zach Ertz Autograph /399





Rookie Team Threads Tyler Eifert Quad Jersey /299



Rookie Team Threads Aaron Dobson Quad Jersey (1 Patch) /299



Each pack of Momentum will yield one autograph or relic. The very popular RPS cards are a continuation of the base set. The regular version are generally numbered to 399 and has parallel versions. They feature three swatches and an autograph. Rookie Team Threads are a quad relic of the various subjects. New to this year are the Class Reunion Signatures which combine between 2-4 players who were drafted in the same year. Looking for sparkle and bling, keep your eyes peeled for Studs. Cards feature some of the biggest names in football with real diamonds!

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 3.5/5

Fun - 4.5/5

Value - 4/5

Rebuy - 3/5

Overall - 19/25 (76%)

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.





SCF Official Review: 2013 Panini Pinnacle

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

24 packs per box

8 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$57.99 - \$74.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- Pinnacle Is Making Its Triumphant Return To Baseball In 2013, With The Classic Look And Feel Of The 1990S!
- Over 30 Inserts And 2 Autographs Per Box!
- Autographs From Players Like Cal Ripken Jr, Frank Thomas, Mike Trout, Ken Griffey Jr, Mariano Rivera And Stephen Strasburg.
- Museum Collections Are Back In All Of Their Nufex Glory. Look For Nufex Cards In Team Pinnacle, Slugfest, Aces, The Naturals And Z-Team As Well As The Museum Collection Parallels.
- Look For Die Cuts And Artists Proof Parallels Of Team 2020, Position Powers, Awaiting The Call, Behind The Numbers, Looking Back And The Hit King. There Will Be Artist's Proof Versions Of The Autographs And Rookie Autograph, And They'll Be Serial Numbered To 25.



CONTENT DESCRIPTION

SLUGFEST

The Slugfest Insert Name Will Take You Back To The Glory Days Of Pinnacle, But The Updated Look And The Nufex Feel Will Bring You Back To Present With Some Of Today's Biggest Sluggers In The Set. When You Think Of The Biggest Homerun Hitters, Names Like Pujols, Fielder And Stanton Come To Mind, And They're All Here In This Insert Set.

PINNACLE OF SUCCESS

This 16-Card Set Highlights Today's Stars Whose Performances Are At Their Peak. These Cards Look Gorgeous On Clear Petg With A Touch Of Pinnacle Magic.

THE HIT KING DIE CUTS

Pete Rose May Be Ignored By One Company, But His Accomplishments Are Far Too Great To Simply Forget About, So We've Created A Special Set To Commemorate His Accolades. Here At Panini We Truly Appreciate The All-Time Hits Leader, And We Respect His Place In History. You Too Can Embrace His 4,256 Hits With A 5-Card Tribute, Simply Called The Hit King.

MUSEUM COLLECTION



Remember The Shimmering, Nufex Look From The Museum Collection Parallels Back In The Mid-90'S? They're Back, With An Updated Player List Featuring Today's Stars And A Tribute To Some Of The Founding Fathers Of Pinnacle's Past.

ARTIST'S PROOFS

The Name Artist's Proof Means So Much To Those Who Chased Them In The Pinnacle Sets Of The Mid-90'S. They Remember Ripping Pack After Pack Waiting To See Which Card Was Stamped With Some Artist's Proof Glory. These Are Back And Still Tough To Find, Which Should Translate To A Serious Chase.

AWAITING THE CALL

Everyone's Got An Opinion As To Which Players Deserve Enshrinement, And Here's A Look At Those That Are Awaiting The Call. In This Set You'll Find 10 Players Who Have A Very Real Possibility Of Getting The Opportunity To Have Their Likeness Bronzed, And Hanging With The Other Immortals Of The Game.

WHAT WE PULLED

Base - 123/150 (82%)

RCs - 36/50 (72%)

The Pinnacle name has resurfaced in baseball after a sabbatical of over ten years. The reincarnation contains a 200-card base set split with 150 veterans and 50 rookies. The cards design is fairly plain, but it does go along with the price point. Boxes will almost yield a complete set. It would come closer if not for a giant amount of inserts as seen below.

Museum Collection (2)

Museum Collection Rookies (1)

Artist's Proof (1)



There are two base parallels. Museum Collection (future copyright infringement lawsuit?) features the players in almost a metallic look on the cards. Artist's Proof look exactly like the base card except for the little logo in the bottom corner.



Neither is numbered. As a matter of fact, none of the inserts are numbered except for a parallel version of one insert set and those are numbered to 1.

- Aces (1)
- Awaiting The Call (4)
- Awaiting The Call Die Cut (1)
- Behind The Numbers (1)
- Clear Vision Cycle (4)
- Essence Of The Game (1)
- Looking Back (1)
- Pinnacle Of Success (2)
- Position Powers (2)
- Slugfest (2)
- Swing For The Fences (2)
- Team 2000 (3)
- Team Pinnacle (2)





As you can see, there are numerous insert sets. I won't bore you with a breakdown of each one. You can see the pics for yourself. For the low-end set collector, completing all of these sets would be your playground, especially the two Clear Vision sets (one for position players and one for pitchers) as they are 75 cards each. Reminds me a lot of products such as Triple Play and Score. Thirty total inserts is a lot, but the not the most in a baseball release.

Henry M. Rodriguez Autograph



Ryan Braun Autograph





Each box will yield two autographs on average, much like Prizm Baseball. The dreaded stickers proliferate this release. There are 100 autograph subjects, 74 are veterans and 26 are rookies. An Artist's Proof parallel version exists for each card and they are numbered to 25 or less.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4.5/5
Design - 3.5/5
Fun - 3/5
Value - 3/5
Rebuy - 2.5/5

Total - 16.5/25 (66%)

NPN Information:

Already expired back in April!!!

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.





SCF Official Review: 2012/13 Panini Signatures By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

1 pack per box
4 cards per pack
Current Retail Price (online): \$99.99 - \$124.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- Signatures Basketball Delivers Three Autographs In Every Four-Card Pack.
- Chase Rookies, Chase Legends, And Chase Stars All Numbered To 25 Or Less.
- Featuring The Panini Basketball Debut Of Autographed Film Cards.
- Expansive 200-Card Autograph Checklist In Signatures And Signatures Film Versions.
- Die-Cut Signatures Cards Of 150 Of The League's Top Current And Retired Players.



PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Signatures

200 Players Will Be Featured In Signatures. Look For 50 Variation Versions Featuring Alternate Photos.

Signatures Die-Cut

Look For This Special Die-Cut Autograph Card Of The Leagues Most Exciting Players!

Signatures Red

Find This Striking Autograph Card With A Beautiful Design And Vibrant Colored Foils.

Chase Stars Green

Collect This Unique Chase Stars Card That Will Have You Searching For All 10 Versions Of The Leagues Best Players.

Chase Rookies Platinum

The Chase Rookies Insert Is Limited To The 15 Best Rookies, With 10 Different Photo Versions Of Each Player.

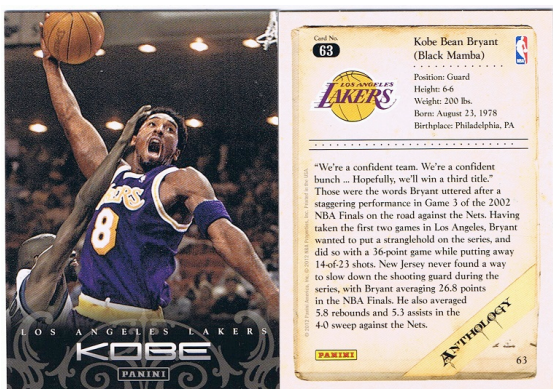
Signature Film Green

Collect This Amazing Autograph Card Featuring A Unique Film Cut Of The League's Brightest Stars!



WHAT WE PULLED

Kobe Anthology (5)



Base /25 (2) - Clyde Drexler, Deron Williams

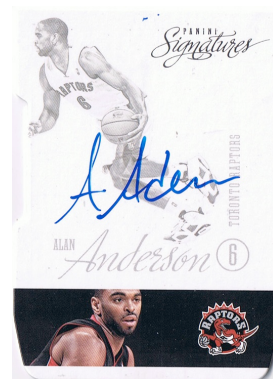


At first glance, Panini Signatures' "base cards" seem really neat as they are numbered to 25. Makes you think you are getting a high-end idea in a mid-end price point. But then you see the fine print. There are three separate categories: Chase Stars, Chase Legends and Chase Rookies. All total, they combine to create an 800 card set (Stars 400, Legends 250, Rookies 150). And you only get two in a box. Good luck on that set! In reality, the 200-card Auto Set is the base set and these are inserts. Confused yet? Cards are designed with the player featured in color and then a larger background shot in black and white. They are on a card stock reminiscent of Prime Signatures.

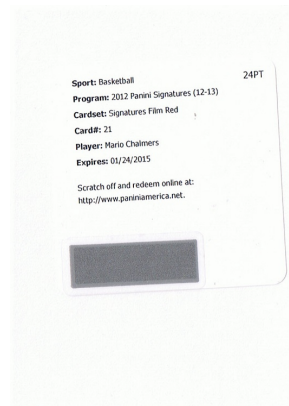
Jan Vesely Base Autograph



Alan Anderson Base Die Cut Autograph (on-card)



Mario Chalmers Signatures Film Red Autograph Redemption





Each box will contain three autographs. There are no relics in Signatures. The main autograph set is the 200-card base set. Then there are many parallels and variations from there. Apparently, everything is numbered except for the base auto and the regular die cut version. The Die Cut version only has 150 subjects and the other set, Signatures Variations, only has 50 subjects. Each set has a Red (numbered to 49 or less), Green (numbered to 5 or less) and Platinum (1/1) parallel versions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base: 5/5 (Hard to complain when the base set is autographs)

Design: 3.5/5

Fun: 4/5

Value: 2.5/5

Rebuy: 2.5/5

Overall: 17.5/25 (70%)

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.





SCF Official Review: 2013 Press Pass Fanfare By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

8 packs per box

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$104.99 - \$124.99

Product Highlights:

Featuring the exciting return of **Rookie Stripes - Autographed Rookie Tape Cards** from **Danica Patrick** and **Ricky Stenhouse Jr.**

Look for **Young Guns Autograph Cards**, featuring up-and-coming stars in NASCAR

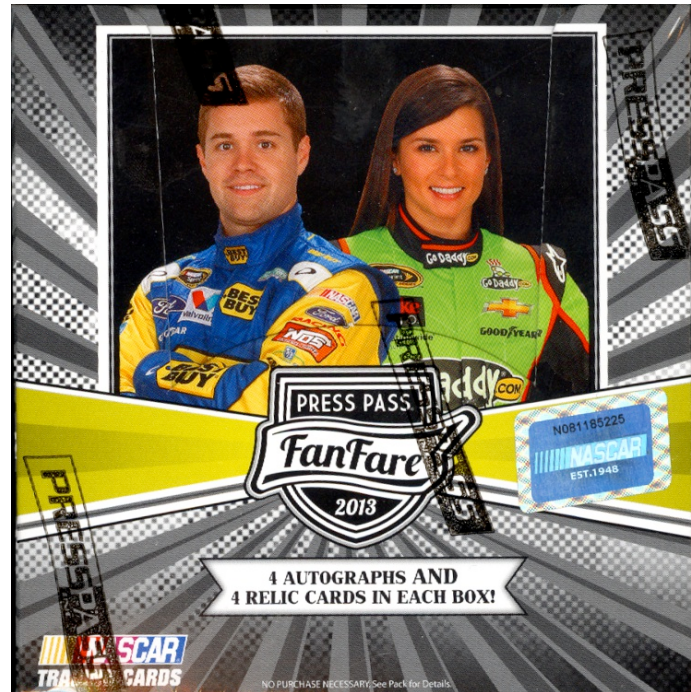
Look for **Magnificent Materials JUMBO Cards**, featuring an **Oversized Memorabilia Swatch**.

Collect all **Four Levels of FanFare Autographs**, plus a 2013

National-exclusive version found only at the National Sports Collectors Convention in Chicago.

100-card base set - The most comprehensive set of the year, featuring the best of featuring the best of NASCAR Sprint Cup Series™, NASCAR Nationwide Series™ and the NASCAR Camping World Truck Series™

Look for numbered and die-cut case set parallels!

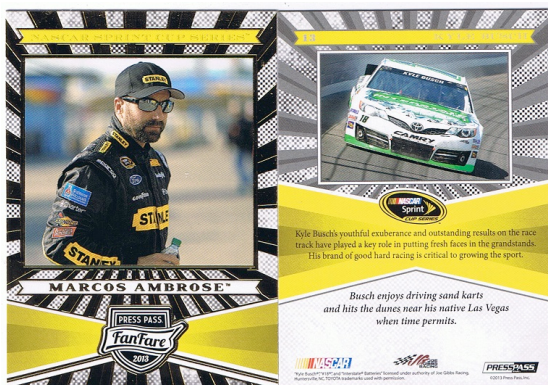


WHAT WE PULLED

Base: 19/100 (19%)

Holofoil Die Cut (8)

Silver /25 (1): Darrell Waltrip





Fanfare contains a 100-card base set. The design is eye-popping with the gold starburst design. Drivers are broken down into four groups: Sprint Cup (yellow fields), Nationwide (blue fields), Camping World Truck (maroon fields) and Legends (bronze fields). There are two parallels, a holo die cut and a silver version /25. The holo parallel is seeded one per pack. There are 10 short prints that appear once in every forty packs, basically 2 per half case.

Fan Following (8)

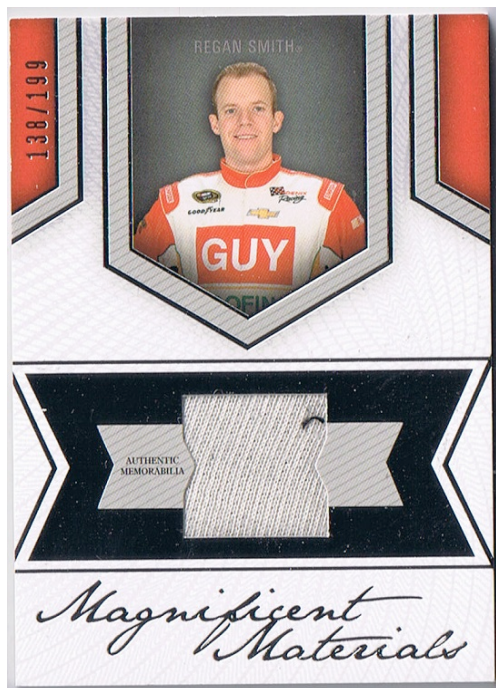
NASCAR Hall Of Fame (1)

Showtime (1)



Three insert sets can be found this year in Fanfare. Inserted one per pack, Fan Following features 15 drivers with 5 short prints that appear once in every 40 packs. The NASCAR HOF series is a continuation set that you will see appear in all Press Pass Racing releases. Finally, Showtime is a 10 card set that centers around the cars and the pit crews. These fall 1 in every 3 packs, so the odds were not with us on this box.

Magnificent Materials Regan Smith Relic
(not mentioned on card) /199



Magnificent Materials Ty Dillon Sheet Metal
(orange, not white like in the scan)/199





Magnificent Materials Gold Justin Allgaier Firesuit /50



Magnificent Materials Holo Jumbo Travis Pastrana 2-color Patch /25



Magnificent Materials Signature Gold Regan Smith 2-color Shoe/Auto /99



Magnificent Materials Signature Blue Juan Pablo Montoya 2-color Patch/Auto /25





Michael McDowell Red Auto /25



Young Guns Red Mackena Bell Auto /99



Like in previous years, Fanfare yields one auto or relic per pack. That's a total of 8 hits in every box. It seems Press Pass raises the bar each year with its use of patches among their relics. While the design looks somewhat basic on the Magnificent Materials, the multitude of relics and patches used is outstanding. There are three levels for the Magnificent Materials Relics as well as the Signature versions. As the photo on the box/packs should give away, Danica Patrick and Ricky Stenhouse Jr. are the featured duo as they compete for the rookie title. They are the lone subjects in Rookie Stripes, which has the yellow racing tape from their bumper. There are signature versions as well that match their car number, 10 for Danica and 17 for Stenhouse. Fanfare Autographs have four levels, all numbered. However, they are numbered differently for the Young Guns as compared to the other subjects.

FINAL THOUGHTS

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

Overall - 22.25/25 (89%)

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



SCF Official Review: 2013 Topps Inception By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

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

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

ON-CARD AUTOGRAPHED ROOKIE CARDS

Rookie Autograph Base Cards

Featuring up to 40 rookies from the NFLPA Rookie Premiere with hard-signed signatures.

- Green Parallel Sequentially numbered to 99
- Purple Parallel Sequentially numbered to 75
- Yellow Parallel Sequentially numbered to 50
- Red Parallel Sequentially numbered to 25
- Inception (Blue) Parallel Numbered 1/1

Inception Element Autographs

The elements of weather come into play as rookies are featured with ON-CARD autographs.

Inception Silver Signings

NFLPA Rookie Premiere subjects featuring ON-CARD signatures in Silver Ink on a black card. Seq #'d to 50

- Gold Signings Parallel Gold Ink Seq #'d to 25
- Gold Signings "Nickname" Parallel Gold Ink feat. Nickname Seq #'d to 10
- Gold Signings "Inscriptions" Parallel Gold Ink feat. Inscription #'d 1/1

Dual Rookie Autographed Cards

Featuring up to 10 different NFLPA Rookie Premiere pairings with hard-signed signatures from each. Numbered to 25

Quad Rookie Autographed Card

Featuring up to 3 different NFLPA Rookie Premiere quad combos on BOOK CARDS, with their signatures ON-CARD. Numbered 1/1

AUTOGRAPHED RELICS

Rookie Autographed Jumbo Patches

Featuring up to 40 NFLPA Rookie Premiere players with their signature and a jumbo-sized jersey patch.

- Green Parallel Sequentially numbered to 75





- Purple Parallel Sequentially numbered to 50
- Yellow Parallel Sequentially numbered to 25
- Glove Parallel Sequentially numbered to 10
- Swoosh Parallel Numbered 1/1
- Inception Team Logo Patch Parallel Numbered 1/1

Inception Autographed Patch Book Cards

NFLPA Rookie Premiere players featuring an image and ON-CARD signature on the left panel and a jumbo-size jersey patch on the right panel. Seq #d to 5

Inception Autographed Letters Book Cards

NFLPA Rookie Premiere players featuring an image and ON-CARD signature on the left panel and a letter from their jersey nameplate on the right panel. #d 1/1

Inception Autographed Laundry Tag Book Cards

NFLPA Rookie Premiere players featuring an image and ON-CARD signature on the left panel and NFL laundry tag on the right panel. Sequentially numbered to 5.

RELICS

Rookie Patches

Featuring up to 40 NFLPA Rookie Premiere players with a jersey patch swatch.

- Green Parallel Sequentially numbered to 75
- Purple Parallel Sequentially numbered to 50
- Yellow Parallel Sequentially numbered to 25
- Red Parallel Sequentially numbered to 10
- Inception Team Logo Patch Parallel Numbered 1/1

Rookie NFL Shield Logo Patch

Up to 20 NFLPA Rookie Premiere subjects featuring an NFL Shield patch from the collar of their jersey. Numbered 1/1

Rookie Jumbo Relics

Featuring up to 40 NFLPA Rookie Premiere players with a jumbo jersey swatch.

- Green Parallel Sequentially numbered to 75
- Purple Parallel Sequentially numbered to 50
- Yellow Patch Parallel Sequentially numbered to 25
- Red Patch Parallel Sequentially numbered to 10
- Inception Team Logo Patch Parallel Numbered 1/1
- Swoosh Parallel Numbered 1/1

BASE CARDS - 72pt Thickness

Veterans

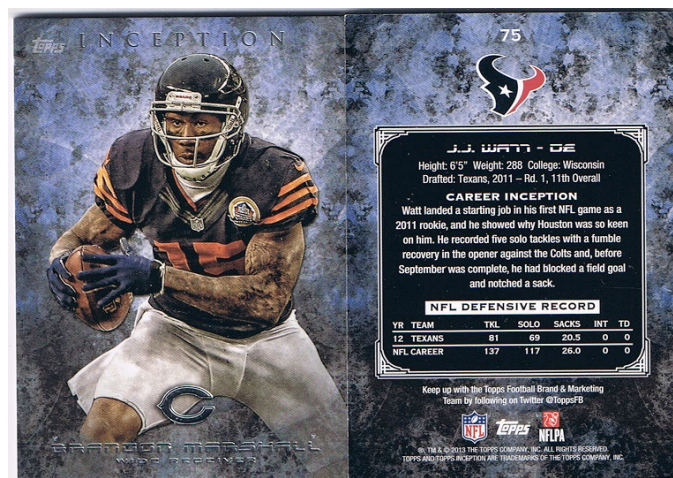


Featuring 100 NFL superstars on elegantly designed cards.

- Green Parallel - 1 per pack
- Purple Parallel Sequentially numbered to 99
- Yellow Parallel Sequentially numbered to 75
- Red Parallel Sequentially numbered to 50
- Inception (Blue) Parallel Numbered 1/1
- Framed Printing Plates Numbered 1/1

WHAT WE PULLED

Base (2) - Brandon Marshall, J.J. Watt



Reminiscent to last year, Topps Inception come with two base cards in every pack. The design is fairly similar to 2012 with the players appearing to be super-imposed on the a bluish background. If you touch the card, the player's photo is slicky and rubbery while the card has a matte finish.

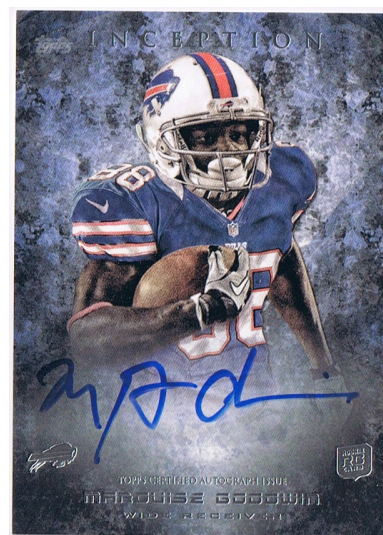
Green /199 (1) - Jermaine Gresham

Yellow /75 (1) - Matt Schaub



There are five parallel levels for the base cards. All boxes should have one Green and the other will be either Purple, Yellow, Red or Blue. You may also find a Printing Plate instead of a second parallel. Outside of the Green, which is numbered to 199, the other parallel will be numbered between 99 to 1. Color level is fairly easy to tell as the background will match the color.

Marquise Goodwin RC/Autograph





Rookie Jumbo Relics Landry Jones Jersey /86



Quinton Patton 3-color Glove (12 color breaks)/Autograph /10



Each box of Inception contains 3 hits that breaks down to 2 autographs of some kind and 1 relic. There is a mix of levels and a variety of types of autos and relics from your standard stand-alone signed card and regular jersey swatch to multi-player signatures and booklets. 20 or so rookies are featured with an NFL Shield 1/1 card. The shield comes from the collar area on the uniform. Booklets include Patch Autographs, Letterman Autographs and Laundry Tag Autographs. Boxes and packs appear to be a better mix than last year, especially when you seem to avoid seeing the same player over and over as a lot of collectors were "cursed" with finding.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 3.5/5

Fun - 4.5/5

Value - 4/5

Rebuy - 4/5

Overall - 20/25 (80%)

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



SCF Official Review: 2013 Topps Finest By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

2 mini boxes per master box
6 packs per mini box
5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$109.99 - \$124.99

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

AUTOGRAPH PATCH CARDS - 1 per MINI BOX!

Rookie Refractor Autographed Patch Cards - Up to 40 NFL Rookies featured with a multi-color patch and signature on Finest refractor technology.

- Blue Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 99
- Red Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 75
- Gold Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 50
- BCA Refractor Parallel - JUMBO PATCH: Sequentially numbered to 10 - NEW!
- Military Refractor Parallel - JUMBO PATCH: Sequentially numbered to 10 - NEW!
- Black Refractor Pigskin NFL Shield Parallel: Featuring the NFL shield from an NFLPA Rookie Premiere football. Numbered 1/1
- Black Refractor NFL Shield Logo Parallel: Numbered 1/1 - NEW!
- SuperFractor Jumbo Patch Parallel: Numbered 1/1

AUTOGRAPH JUMBO RELIC CARDS - 1 per MINI BOX!

Autographed Jumbo Relic Refractor - Up to 50 Rookie and Veteran NFL players featuring an autograph with a jumbo jersey relic swatch.

- Blue Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 99
- Red Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 75
- Gold Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 50
- Prism Refractor PATCH Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 25
- X-Fractor PATCH Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 15
- Black Refractor Swoosh PATCH Parallel: Numbered 1/1
- SuperFractor TEAM PATCH Parallel: Numbered 1/1

Dual Autograph Dual Relic: Up to 20 cards featuring two collectible players with a jersey relic swatch and an autograph from each. Sequentially numbered to 10

- Dual Autograph Dual Patch SuperFractor - Numbered 1/1





The Rundown On



Triple Autograph Triple Relic: Up to 10 cards featuring three collectible players with a jersey relic swatch and an autograph from each. Sequentially numbered to 10

- Triple Autograph Triple Patch SuperFractor - Numbered 1/1

Rookie Refractor Quad Autograph Patch Book Card: Up to 5 cards featuring four rookie autographs and multi-color patch swatches from each on a Finest refractor book card. Numbered 1/1

AUTOGRAPH CARDS - At Least 1 Per Case!

Rookie Refractor Autograph Variations: ON-CARD autograph variations of the base rookie cards! Numbered to 50

- Blue Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 25
- Red Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 15
- Prism Refractor: Sequentially numbered to 5
- SuperFractor Parallel: Numbered 1/1

Finest Moments Autographs: Up to 25 veterans and top rookies featuring their autographs and a highlighted performance.

- Prism Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 10
- SuperFractor Parallel: Numbered 1/1

Finest Atomic Refractor Rookie Autographs: Up to 35 rookies featuring an autograph on a perimeter die-cut card on refractor technology :

- Finest Atomic Rookies Autographed Red Refractor: ON-CARD autograph. Sequentially numbered to 25
- Finest Atomic Rookies Autographed Prism Refractor: ON-CARD autograph. Sequentially numbered to 10
- Finest Atomic Rookies Autographed SuperFractor: ON-CARD autograph. Numbered 1/1

INSERT CARDS - 4 Per MASTER BOX!

Finest Atomic Refractor Rookies: Up to 35 rookies featuring a perimeter die-cut on refractor technology. 1 per Mini Box

Finest Moments: Up to 25 NFL Veteran and Rookie players featured with a defining career highlight. 1 per Mini Box

- Refractor Parallel - Inserted 1:5 mini boxes

BONUS REDEMPTION HITS!

Uncut Sheet Redemptions - Featuring uncut sheets of veteran and rookie base forms including Refractor and X-Fractor parallels.

Mystery Rookie Autograph Redemption (1 subject):

Autographed Rookie card of a TBD player, announced during the 2013 season. Limited



BASE CARDS and PARALLELS

Base Cards

Featuring 50 of the most anticipated NFL rookies and 100 exceptional NFL veterans.

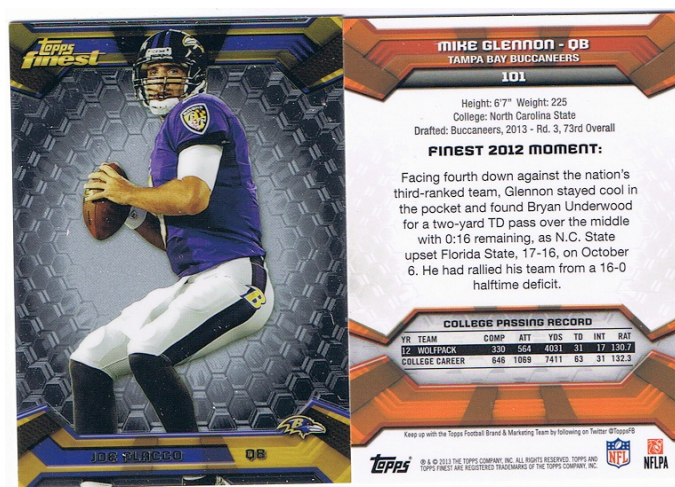
Parallel Cards

- Refractor Parallel: Inserted 1:3
- X-Fractor Parallel: Inserted 1:6
- Blue Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 99
- Gold Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 75
- Red Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 50
- Prism Refractor Parallel: Sequentially numbered to 25
- SuperFractor Parallel: Numbered 1/1
- Printing Plates: Numbered 1/1

WHAT WE PULLED

Base - 33/100 (33%)

Rookies - 17/50 (34%)



Finest contains a 150-card base set featuring 100 veterans and 50 rookies. They are distributed fairly at almost a 2 to 1 ratio of veterans to rookies. Players are showcased on a chrome foilboard with mini hexagons throughout the background. Rookies are seen in their current, non-photo shoot, jerseys.

Refractors (3)

Rookie Refractors (1)

X-Fractors (1)

Gold Refractors /75 (1) - Darren Sproles





There are seven refractor levels from the basic refractor to the SuperFractor 1/1s. The base refractor and the rookie version is a bit different as the rookie version seems shinier and block out the background. All are numbered except for the aforementioned regular refractor and the xfractor. Generally in each mini box you will get 2 refractors and 1 other type.

Finest Atomic Die Cut Rookies (1)
Finest Moments Refractor (1)



There are two insert sets in Finest this year. As the name implies, the Rookie Atomic Die Cuts feature this year's crop of rookies on a unique cut-out card. Finest Moments on a Career Defining Moment/Game for the player seen on the card. There is also a refractor version that falls one in every five mini boxes.

Lamar Miller Jumbo Gold Jersey/Autograph /50

Vance McDonald Camo Refractor 2-color Patch/Autograph /10



Each mini box will yield either an autographed patch or a jumbo autograph relic. Be on the lookout for dual, triple and quad versions. In addition, bonus (case hit type) autographs can be found from the two insert sets as well as the base rookie cards. Finally, there are Mystery Rookie Autograph and Uncut Sheet Redemptions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

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

Overall - 20.75/25 (83%)



The Big E in the Hall? **By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888**



Every year, come induction time, the same debates are heard over and over again. Let's face it, we're all fans and we all have our favorites... If you grew up in Vancouver watching the Russian Rocket blast pat defenders before bewildering goaltenders, you more the likely breathed a sight of release when the Hall opened its doors to Pavel Bure in 2012. If you hail from Boston, you were probably rather happy that Cam Neely's injury shortened career didn't prevent him from being immortalized. But, for every happy fan there is one who does not believe the calling to the Hall was deserved.

Most of the time, I do not feel very strongly about other teams' players induction, I figure if the people in the know think they deserve it, they probably do. After all, they've followed their career much more than I did. However, if

someone tried to make a case as to why Martin Brodeur shouldn't make it in, I can tell you that it'd be all over them explain the 312 reasons why he should be a shoo-in. There is however one player who I feel very strongly about in a negative way. Year after year there are plenty of people to clamor that Eric Lindros deserves to be inducted and I think it's safe to say that I've never disagreed with another statement as strongly. Why you ask? No, it's not because of his injury plagued/shorten career. I do believe that in some cases, it's fine to enshrine a player who could have done so much more had he had more years or been more healthy... Mario Lemieux, Mike Bossy, the above-mentioned Cam Neely and Pat Lafontaine to name a few.

In his career, Lindros did put up impressive numbers: 865 points in 760 games. On the other hand, he didn't really capture much silverware, be it individual or collective. He didn't get to lift Lord Stanley's cup and captured two of the main individual awards, the Lester B. Pearson and the Hall in 1995. In all fairness, I must also had that he got an invite to the All-star game in 7 of his 13 seasons which is rather good. But this is not where my main argument stems from. Frankly, I believe that a player's worthiness for induction in the Hall should also take into account what he did for the game and what kind of a role model or leader if you will he was.

Do you remember the 1991 NHL entry draft? I most certainly do. No, I am not a Nordiques fan, in fact, I am a die-hard Habs enthusiast so you can imagine that I didn't care much for the fate of the Fleurdelisées... However, I do care about the NHL and the game of hockey. The way the league is set up is simple, if a team is struggling, it gets to pick earlier in the draft. This helps to ensure parity in the league and also to reduce the risk of a struggling franchise being a perennial loser (although some teams can't seem to shake it off). Therefore, in my view, for the system to work, they players must buy into it. If you chose to pursue a career as a





hockey player, you know what the deal is and you are aware that you could end up playing in Winnipeg or in Nashville for instance and not in sunny Los Angeles or star studded Pittsburgh. It's part of the equation and every drafted player should deal with that.

Some players have thought themselves above this simple rule however and Lindros is one of them. I know, so was "Super Mario" who was less than keen to join the then starless Pens... Bottom line is though, he did end up seeing sense and complying with the rules of the league. He went to Pittsburgh and turned a struggling team on the verge of collapsing into a successful franchise and he did so not once but twice, once as a player and once as an owner so on that basis, I think I can get over his initial foolishness. Lindros did no such thing though... What he did was make it known that he would refuse to "grace" Quebec city with his talent even if he were to be drafted by Marcel Aubut's team. Nevertheless the Nordiques did draft him because



when such a hyped up player comes around, you can hardly pass on him. Who knows, perhaps they thought that Lindros would see sense in the end just like Lemieux had... Quebec had no such luck though and Lindros refused to report to the team and decided to play for team Canada instead. To me, this was disrespectful to the team, to its fans and, of course, to the NHL itself. I've explained above how important it is that they players comply with the system and to me, failure to do so means that Lindros should not be inducted as a legend of hockey.

Perhaps I would have felt differently had he managed to capture the Cup or acknowledge that perhaps, he had treated Quebec, the fans and the league wrongly then...to my knowledge, he did no such thing. Don't get me wrong though, it is fine for a player to stand up for himself when his health is concerned, I saw nothing wrong with the way he dealt with his injury and was shocked by the way the Bobby Clarke of this world treated him (saying a guy has a glass jaw when he



doesn't want to play and in fact, cannot play because of a concussion, is rather harsh) but to me, it was too little too late, Lindros had lost my respect and any chance of admiration all the way back in 1991 when I was just 11 years old...

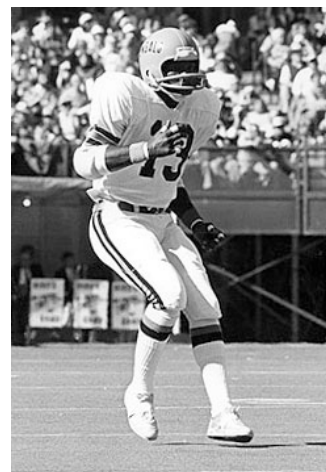




Hall of Famer? By Kyle Gillbraith aka TheNati#22

Is Ken Riley the most underrated defensive back to ever play in the NFL? I think so and here is why...

Riley played 15 seasons from 1969 to 1983 all with the Cincinnati Bengals. In that time, he amassed 65 interceptions, 596 return yards off interceptions, 18 fumble recoveries and 5 interceptions returned for touchdowns. These numbers are good for 5th all-time in career interceptions and where are the 4 guys in front of Riley? All 4 are in the hall of fame, 7 of the top 11 all-time interception leaders are in the Hall of Fame 3 of them with less career picks than Riley. The only player with a real shot at passing Riley is Ed Reed who is sitting at 61 career interceptions and most would agree Reed is a sure fire Hall of Famer and possibly the best safety to ever play. After Reed, the only active player that's close is Charles Woodson who is at 55 and he's another player that will probably be in the Hall of Fame even if he does not pass Riley.



It's not just that Riley is not in the Hall of Fame that bothers me. It's that he got very little recognition throughout his entire career. Not one time did he make the Pro Bowl or the AFL all-star game! While recording 9 interceptions and 8 interceptions in a single season and at least 3 picks or more in 12 of his 15 seasons. The fact that such an excellent player has got little to no attention from the Hall of Fame voters irritates me. I understand that most of the teams he played on were not very good, but such a difference maker deserves consideration.

To be above average in the NFL for 15 years and only play for one team is increasingly rare in the league and for one to have had the impact Riley had for his entire career and yet get no recognition is absurd. Part of the problem is that Riley was a quiet guy... He did not showboat and he rarely celebrated his play. He just did his job and did it well for longer than most could ever hope to last in the NFL. He was a major player in the early '80s super bowl run the Bengals made with 5 interceptions. Ultimately they lost the big game to the 49ers. In Riley's final season in 1983 he grabbed 8 interceptions and scored 2 touchdowns as a 36 year old corner in the NFL. These numbers are excellent and well deserving of joining his old teammate Anthony Munoz in the Hall of Fame.

My concern is that since he was such a low key player, he will get forgotten about and may never get in. That is why I am trying to bring this to the attention of as many people as I can. Not just because I am a Bengals fan, but because I have always been a fan of the underdog, the low key players are usually my favorites. One of my favorite players all-time is Fred Taylor. He was an excellent running back but got almost no attention! However, that is a story for another day! Back on the topic of the Hall of Famer that should be Ken Riley. I know there are numerous articles chronicling the career of Riley and the injustice of him not being in the hall of fame. What I do not understand is how all this chatter has gone unnoticed by the Hall of Fame voters. His career numbers alone are worthy of the Hall but add in that he was a good character low key guy who was dedicated to one franchise his entire career and he is everything most people want in a player.

I hope that like the recent inductee Cris Carter (GO BUCKS!!!) Riley will one day be inducted into the Hall. As long as there are people lobbying for him and sharing just how good he was for 15 years the right outcome will eventually happen. I know there is a log jam of various players almost every year most of which are well deserving of the Hall but there are few who have been ignored by voters for as long as Riley has been. Get this man a Bronze Bust in the Hall while he is still around to enjoy it!!!



A Voice in Support of the Quiet Man: Why Isn't Gil Hodges a Hall of Famer

By Pedro Maicazo aka metsmagic18



Gil Hodges is a revered player and manager who led the New York Mets to a World Series title, and the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers to numerous pennants and titles. He was beloved by fans and teammates, and was known as “The Quiet Man” for his gentle demeanor on and off the field. Despite all this, he is one of the greatest players not to enter the Hall of Fame. This has always troubled me, but now I’m really going to look into the possible reasons why he has been kept out.

Statistician, author, and former Red Sox employee Bill James compiled a list of 16 fair criteria that a player should pass to be allowed in the Hall of Fame. To figure out if Hodges belongs, we will see if he truly belongs with the all-time greats, or if he was just a nice guy who happened to play for some good teams.

Was he ever regarded as the best player in baseball? Did anybody, while he was active, suggest that he was the best player in baseball?

I don’t think there is a better way to see if he was regarded as the best player in baseball than to look at MVP voting, the award that is more or less given to the best player in baseball. Gil finished in the top 10 of MVP voting 4 times, (and once 11th). So no, he was not the best player in baseball while he was active, but quotes from Stan Musial and Pee Wee Reese each spoke on his behalf, calling him the best player at his position of his time. Musial says of Hodges: “Perhaps the best first baseman of his time”. Pee Wee Reese says: “If you had a son, it would be a great thing to have him grow up to be just like Gil Hodges”. Teammate Tommy Lasorda says: “He was a great, great, great player. We have to get him in (to the Hall of Fame)”.

Was he the best player on his team?

No. But he was a close second. Duke Snider was the best Dodger while Gil Hodges played for them, but I think it is fair to put Hodges second. He had 6 30+ home run seasons and 2 40+ home run seasons while driving in 100+ runs 7 years in a row. Campanella had 4 seasons of 30+ home runs, 1 season of 40+ home runs, and 3 seasons of driving in 100+ runs. Could Campanella have had a better career if he had not had a late career start due to the color barrier, and an early end due to a car accident? Yes, but sadly these things did occur, and Hodges stats are simply better. Robinson meant more to the game of baseball than Hodges without a doubt, but is he a better player than Hodges? It is difficult to tell, due to their very different strengths and stats.

Was he the best player in baseball at his position? Was he the best player in the league at his position?

The answer to this question is a resounding yes. During the 1950s, he led all Major League first basemen in home runs, games, at bats, runs, hits, RBI, total bases, and extra base hits. He was an 8 time all-star, the most of any first basemen while he played, and won the first 3 Gold Gloves ever awarded. Among all players, regardless of position, Hodges was second in home runs and RBI during the 1950s.



Did he have an impact on a number of pennant races?

Gil Hodges had an impact on just about every NL pennant race from 1948 to 1959. He won 2 World Series and 7 NL pennants. He is known for his disastrous performance in the 1952 World Series, where he started 0 for 21, but should be recognized for his important contributions in the Dodgers 1955 World Championship and 1956 NL Pennant win. In the '55 World Series, Hodges hit a go-ahead home run in game 4 to go along with an RBI single, followed by scoring the winning run in game 5. In the decisive game 7, it was he who drove in both runs for the Dodgers in their 2-0 win. In '56 he had a go-ahead three run home run in game 1, 4 RBI in game 2, scored the go ahead run in game three, and two RBI doubles in that same game. He would end his career with 21 World Series RBI and 5 home runs.

Was he a good enough player that he could continue to play regularly after his prime?

From Hodges 35th birthday onward, he played 100+ games in three consecutive seasons, hitting 25 long balls and driving in 80 runs in one of those seasons. After leaving the Dodgers, he had a respectable 1962 before retiring at age 39 in 1963. He fared much better than his teammate Duke Snider, who would retire at age 37 after a weak 1962, an acceptable 1963 and a miserable 1964.

Is he the best player in baseball history who isn't in the Hall of Fame?

Yes, he is. He is the player who was the closest to induction without getting in. Other greats not in the Hall are respectable shortstop Alan Trammell, speedy Tim Lincecum, and deserving pitcher Jack Morris. If I had to, I would honestly put Hodges second to Jeff Bagwell on this list. (I am not including players who have only been up for one year) Bagwell was a much better hitter, and added a Gold Glove to his resume.

Are most players with comparable career statistics in the Hall of Fame?

Using BR's "similarity scores", I was surprised to find that the answer to this question is more or less no. The 4 players who are ranked as "truly similar" to Gil, are George Foster, Jack Clark, Norm Cash, and Rocky Colavito. All of these men were never really considered Hall of Famers. Though their stats are alike, only Cash had the character of Hodges, and never managed teams to World Series titles. Similarly, Foster, Clark, and Cash were all never known as good fielders, combining for 0 Gold Gloves. Clark was never the best player at his position, nor was Colavito. Colavito's stats are impressive, but drop off after he turns 33. Clark and Cash appeared in one World Series, Colavito appeared in zero. Foster was a contributor to the Big Red Machine, but had a huge ego problem, which would result in his release from the Mets in 1986. The player, who matches up best to Hodges, is in the Hall of Fame. This is Tony Perez. 9 home runs, 400 RBI, .006 batting average, and one all-star selection separate Perez and Hodges. They both appeared in multiple World Series, and won multiple titles. They were each one of the best on their team, but Perez has 0 Gold Gloves. These two men are extremely similar, yet Perez made the Hall of Fame in 2000.

Do the players' numbers meet Hall of Fame standards?

In James official standards, he is just short, just like his current efforts to get into the Hall. His rank on the Gray Ink scale is 128, an average Hall of Famer would have 144. On the Black Ink scale he has a score of 2, a Hall of Famer would have 27. By the Hall of Fame monitor scale he has a score of 83, while a likely Hall of Famer would rank with 100. Last, on the Hall of Fame Standards scale, he has 32 points, while an average Hall of Famer would have 50. We will have to credit Hodges with a "no" for this question.



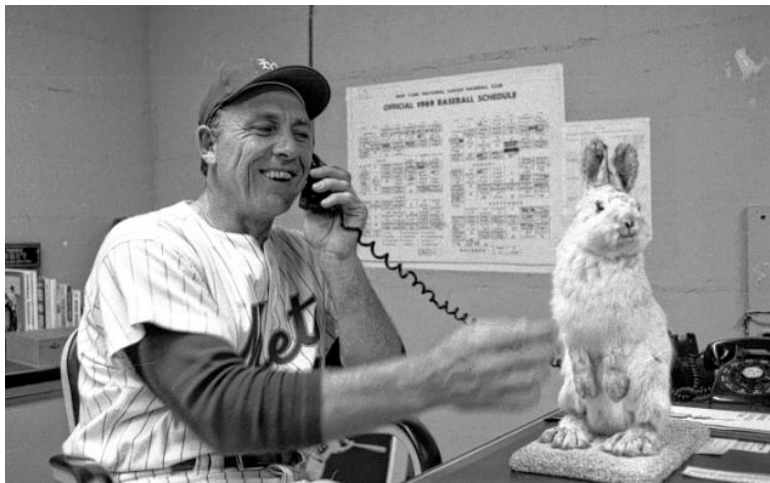
Is there evidence to suggest he was significantly better or worse than his statistics suggest he was?

He was the best first baseman fielding-wise of his time, missed three years early in his career due to World War II, and is one of the most respected players and leaders of his day.

Is he the best eligible player at his position that isn't in the Hall of Fame?

Now that Orlando Cepeda and Tony Perez are in, he is the best eligible player at his position besides Bagwell. Don Mattingly and Keith Hernandez do not have the offensive stats to make the Hall of Fame, and the only other comparison would be Steve Garvey, who is closer to the Hall of Fame standards set by James, but has never received even half of the votes necessary.

How many MVP type seasons did he have? Did he ever win? If not, how many times was he close?



He had MVP quality seasons in 1951 and 1954. In 1954 his 42 home runs and 130 RBI while playing in every game of the season with a .302 average were not enough, as he finished 10th, behind pitchers Robin Roberts and Johnny Antonelli. Teammates Pee Wee Reese and Duke Snider, and Al Dark, Stan Musial, and Joe Adcock, who all had worse home run and RBI numbers than Hodges, with Dark hitting lower than Hodges. While Willie Mays won, with less home runs and RBI than Hodges, it was 2nd place finisher Ted Kluszewski who deserved the award. Putting up better numbers than anyone else in the league. In 1951, Hodges was hurt by a low average as he finished 16th in the voting, but deserved to be in the top

ten.

How many All-Star games was he selected to? Are most of the other players with this many selections in the Hall of Fame?

Hodges had 8 selections including 7 in a row. 14 players with 8 selections are in the Hall of Fame.

If this man were the best player on his team, would it be likely that the team could win the pennant?

This is the toughest of all. The answer to this is no. The protection he got with Snider hitting above him really helped him, and without Snider, the Dodgers would be contender, but probably not a pennant winner. They would need an additional bat in that lineup, Hodges and Campanella with Robinson and Reese and the top would not be enough.

What impact did he have on baseball history, rule changes, new equipment or legal matters?

He certainly didn't have an impact on new equipment, legal matters, or rule changes. But history remembers him as a kind hearted hero, slugger, and a great role model for any fan of the game.



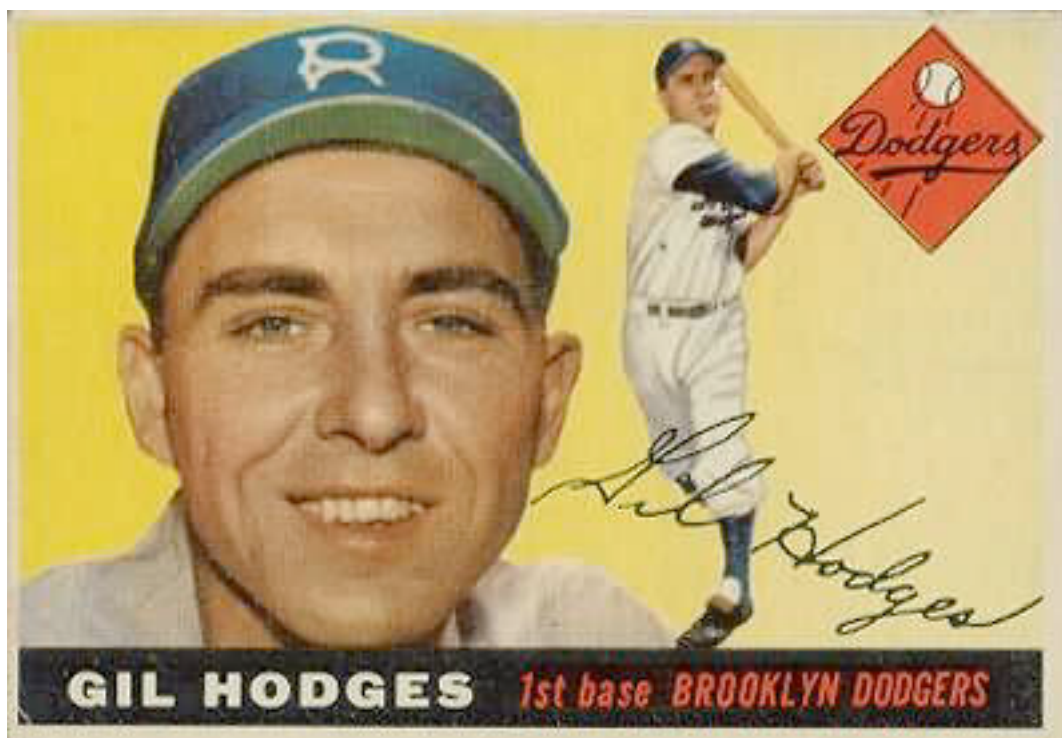
Did he make a positive contribution to the game outside of his playing career, through off-the-field events or as a coach, manager, or executive?

He made a huge contribution, managing the 1969 Mets to their first World Championship and changing the perception of the team forever. The Mets, for these contributions retired Hodges' number, 14. Sadly, while still managing, he passed away, leaving us to wonder if he could have helped the game in another way.

Did he uphold the standards of sportsmanship and character that the Hall of Fame, in its written guidelines, instructs its voters to consider?

100% yes, Hodges absolutely upheld the standards of sportsmanship. He won the Lou Gehrig Award, given to the player displaying the most character and sportsmanship in 1959. He is considered one of the nicest guys in baseball history. Treated his teammates with dignity and respect, which was what he received from them in return. Besides the respect of his teammates, family members, and newspaper writers, the players he managed all refer to him in the highest regard (except for Hawk Harrelson, who I will never understand). Due to this, he was given the nickname "Quiet Man".

Wrap-up: Is Hodges a Hall of Famer? Yes, he meets 10 of the 16 criteria for a Hall of Famer (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16). The only reason that I don't say 11, is that if I'm using Bill James stats, it is only fair to put Garvey ahead of Hodges.





MLB Changes

By Richard Heaton aka Zanderlex

It is true that baseball is America's pastime and has been around for well over a hundred years, but there are still quite a few changes that could better influence the MLB as a whole. For example, every few years, the world comes together to take part in the World Baseball Classic ("WBC"). The WBC is a tradition that has been going on for the past eight years and seems to be growing. However, the WBC does seem to be imposing a few challenges on MLB.

One of these challenges is that the WBC takes place during Spring training, a time that is meant for all MLB players to get ready for the upcoming season. Those who are picked to represent their country will now have to miss some of that valuable playing time to play overseas.



Another problem in this sense would be rookies and prospects who are chosen to play in the WBC because Spring training means even more to them than veteran players as it is the time for them to show their worth to the team.

How do we fix this? By moving parts of the WBC to another month, maybe even during All Star week. Imagine having the All Star Futures Game and the Legends Softball Game on Saturday and having the WBC Championship on Sunday, which would then be followed by the Home Run Derby and the All Star Game on Monday and Tuesday.

Maybe we can move both the championship game and the semi finals to All Star week, this would allow all of the players to get a few extra days with their teams before the season starts. If the semi finals are used as well, one semi final matchup would be held Friday afternoon while the second match would be held that evening. The championship match will be played Saturday and then regular All Star week festivities would begin. Not only would this be a great way to help the players stay with their teams longer, but a lot of revenue would be raised.

The finals were played at AT&T park in front of roughly 35,000 fans. That's not a bad number, but if you squeeze the final three games during the All Star week, a lot more fans would end up watching the game because just by placing it days before the All Star Game, it will feel more energized to the fans.

Another way to Improve the MLB would be to add another team to each League. Each league would now have 16 teams, and would be split into four divisions of four teams each. With fewer teams in each division, the competition would most likely be greater because some divisions may play well and have all four teams within 5-10 games of 1st place.



If there are four divisions, there would really be no need for a wild card spot because each league will now have four playoff spots, one from each division. However, there is a way to keep the five team playoff format that MLB now has, but there will also be a way to have six teams in each league compete in the playoffs.

This will equate to four division leaders and two Wild card teams. The Wild Card series will have each pair of teams play a best of three series. After this, each league will have three teams remaining. During the Division series each team will play each other team once. As an example, let's say we have the Dodgers, Cardinals, and Braves left.

On day one, the Dodgers play the Braves and the Cardinals get off. Day two, we see the Cardinals play the Dodgers while the Braves get off. On the final day, the Cardinals play the Braves, and the Dodgers are off. This format will allow all games to be played over the course of three days with each team getting a day off. The two teams with the best record go on to the Championship series. This is where it gets tricky, if all three teams win one game apiece, the team with the worst regular season record will be eliminated and the other two go on to the Championship series. The Championship series will be best of five, and then the World Series will stay as a best of 7 series. Some might say that having these four series will extend the length of the playoffs, but instead it will actually shorten it. This is because the most games that can be played during the current structure is 20 which is from one wild card game, five division games, and seven games for both the Championship series and World Series.

This 12 team playoff structure consists of three game Wild Card, three game Division Series (two per team), five game Championship series, and a seven game World Series for a maximum total of 18 games.

It would also be possible to have the Championship Series stay at seven games and then the playoff structure would also have 20 games.

There are many other ways that the MLB can be improved upon, but these are the biggest two.

