

Collector's

The cover features a dynamic, high-angle shot of two athletes. On the left, NHL player Alex Ovechkin is shown in a white jersey with the number 10 and the NHL logo, wearing a white helmet and holding a hockey stick. On the right, Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers is shown in a green and yellow uniform, wearing a yellow helmet and holding a football. The background is a collage of sports-related imagery, including a large American flag and a football field. The title 'Collector's' is written in a large, stylized yellow font with a black outline. The text 'FEATURING THE INTERVIEWS ISSUE' is centered in a white box. The date 'March 2011' is in a yellow box at the bottom left. The word 'SUPER' is partially visible at the bottom center.

FEATURING

THE INTERVIEWS
ISSUE

March 2011

SUPER

COME MEET FELLOW SCF MEMBERS AT
THE CARD SHOW IN MONTREAL ON
MARCH 26 AND 27! LOOK FOR US IN THE
CORPORATE BOOTHS AREA!

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Collectibles

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11h-12h30
Johnny Bower



13h-14h
Marianne St-Gelais



14h-15h
Jaques Demers



15h-16h
Marian Stastny



DIMANCHE 27

Groupe Collections Montréal et
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de 11h-13h

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4



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SAMEDI 26 - DE 10 H @ 18 H

DIMANCHE 27 - DE 10 H @ 15 H

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Pour informations / Booths for dealers : (514) 525-6001 - info@intcoll.ca

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It's the Circle of Life

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

As March gets into gear, the football fans are just winding down from their jubilation over the Packers' win (if they are Green Bay fans) or getting over their disappointment if they support any other team, the puckheads are going crazy with excitement as the NHL season is in its last full month and the race for the playoffs is heating up and as for the boys of summer, well, they're warming up! We may live this circle every year but I got to admit it is one of my favorite times of the year. There's nothing like the anticipation of watching playoffs hockey every night!

In this issue, you will find quite a few interviews, some entries from our latest writing contest which was won by Thomas Gast with an article that you can read on p.23. In fact, there were so many entries and so much content to chose from this month that there was simply no room for product reviews. We shall make amend next month...

Speaking of next month, that issue will focus on our trip to the Montreal card show held at the Pierre Charbonneau Centre. If you are in Montreal on March 26 and 27 please do drop by to see us. Myself and Luc Seguin (aka Coolhandluke) will be there to promote SCF and try to recruit new members. If

your friends are not yet on board bring them along, who knows we may have a contest up our sleeve as well...you know us right? I really hope to see many of you there as I had a blast in Cleveland in 2009 meeting many SCF members. Of course, if you have some Patrick Roy or Martin Brodeur cards, don't forget to bring them along!

Keep an eye on the announcement forum as the next writing contest should shortly be announced, as soon as the topics have been selected. If you have any suggestion of topic please feel free to drop my a PM, my inbox is always open especially for good ideas!

The same goes if you have any comments on this or on any other issues of Collector's Corner. A lot of people put in a lot of work to produce this magazine so we're always happy to get some feedback. With that being said, I should probably leave you to browse the pages and read the articles that grab your attention, enjoy!

Until next time, or until the card show if you are coming, have fun trading!



MARCH 2011



Every month, we aim to provide you with an accurate list of release dates, however as you will no doubt know, release dates do change. At the time of publishing, all dates were correct.

March 2011

	1	2 	3  - SP Authentic Football	4  - Playoff National Treasures Football
7	8	9  - Panini Absolute Memorabilia Basketball  - Topps Opening Day Baseball	10	11
14	15	16  - Topps Heritage Baseball  - Panini Pinnacle Hockey	17	18
21	22  - SP Authentic Hockey	23  - Press Pass Football  - Panini Classic Basketball	24 	25
28	29  - SP Authentic Basketball	30  - Panini Playoff Contenders Hockey	31	



One-on-One With StarSide Signatures
By Richard McAdam aka RGM81



Recently, Montreal Canadiens goaltender Carey Price made some headlines for striking a pose after turning aside five consecutive Pittsburgh Penguins shooters in a Canadiens 2-1 shootout victory.

In his post-game interview, Price referred to his friend “Tuffy Cool” and said that it was something that had been in the works for a while. What only very few people know is the true identity of “Tuffy Cool” – while the media went overboard in its dissection of Price’s intentions or motives with the simple pose, it was really little more than an inside joke between two friends. I had the opportunity to speak with “Tuffy Cool,” who is better known as Wessley Perisa of StarSide Signatures.

For those who have not heard, StarSide Signatures has earned a reputation as being the most reliable and trusted source of authentic Montreal Canadiens autographed memorabilia. To commemorate the team’s 100th anniversary, under the Iconic Dreams label, a massive piece of art known as “Centennial” was created. The print features the signatures of 100 of the greatest Canadiens of all time, including a cut signature of Maurice Richard, and is rightfully known as “the Mona Lisa of sports memorabilia.” The majestic piece is limited to 2009 copies.



In addition to the ambitious project that is “Centennial,” StarSide Signatures holds a number of public and private autograph signings each year with members of the Canadiens, often with significant portions of the funds raised going to charities in Montreal.

On a personal level, I’ve had the opportunity to become friends with Wess over the past couple years. We chat every so often on Facebook, and if I ever get to Montreal again for a game I look forward to meeting him. He’s become my go-to guy for all my Carey

Price autograph needs, and there are close to a dozen signed photos on my wall bearing the distinctive Price 31 Authentic hologram logo.

After receiving my latest pieces (a dual signed Carey Price/Patrick Roy memorabilia card and a Price photo featuring the stick that is the centerpiece of my collection) I thought it would be interesting to



know more about Wess, how he got into the business of sports memorabilia, and his thoughts when he saw Carey Price break out the “Tuffy Cool” pose.

Richard: Did you collect hockey cards as a kid? Any memories of certain cards going in bike spokes or lost in games?

Wess: Of course! Doesn’t every Canadian kid? I remember VIVIDLY collecting the O-Pee-Chee from 1982-1987, and had a dozen or more of rookie cards of legends like Mario Lemieux, Steve Yzerman, Patrick Roy, and so many more. I had a bunk bed with

my older brother, and we would have friends come over and we would play “tops” off the top bunk. The purpose of the game is who ever can drop their card from the top bunk onto the other gets to collect both cards! I was DEADLY!

Richard: When we were kids, the only way you could get a card signed was to actually meet the players – the hobby has definitely changed. Do you still collect cards today? What do you think of some of the advances that have happened with making cards, like the inclusion of pieces of jerseys and autographed cards?

Wess: I do not collect cards anymore. My last year of collecting came during the era in which card companies expanded from good old O-Pee-Chee and Topps to Upper Deck, Score, Pro Set, etc. I enjoyed collecting when I could collect EVERY card to complete EVERY set for an entire year, but that became impossible with so many sets, and then came the sub sets, and refractors and the like. I do feel the card industry SAVED itself when they thought outside the “wax box” and came up with signed cards, and even more creative, the game used cards which borders on GENIUS.

Richard: So if not cards, do you have any special signed photos or other items that you keep for yourself?

Wess: I don’t have nearly as much as I used to have. I have let many items go in charity auctions, gifts, etc. The items I do have though at this point ALL mean something to me. A recent addition is among my favourites; I will talk about it later.

Richard: When building your brand and getting started, how does a new company build a reputation and a clientele? Do you deal directly with the players or do you go through their agents?

Wess: It takes YEARS to build relationships with the players and their agents, and I have to admit I have been pretty blessed to get to work with the many players that I have to date.

Richard: Who are some of the players that you’ve had deals with, and have done signings with over the years? What would be your “dream” signing session?



Wess: Wow, there have been HUNDREDS. Some key legends I have worked with would be Jean Beliveau, Bobby Hull, Patrick Roy, Steve Yzerman, Mike Bossy...my mind is racing now I gotta stop! As for my “dream” signing session, that’s tough. But if we are sticking with hockey I would have to say my dream signing if I could pick individuals who are no longer with us would be to sign with Maurice Richard and Pelle Lindbergh.

Richard: Do you have a physical store to sell items, or is everything online? You’ve got the official websites (www.starsidesignatures.com and www.iconicdreams.com) – are there other venues that people can find your items?

Wess: I used to own a massive gallery, but closed it down during the lockout. Now I supply stores all across North America, and of course have my two main websites.



Richard: Your biggest project to date is of course “Centennial.” How did you come up with the concept, and can you describe the process of how something like that eventually ends up in final form?

Wess: To be brief, the idea came from wanting to do something special to celebrate the Canadiens’ 100th Anniversary in 2009. At first the idea was to have 6 legends and 6 current players sign a special print. It then grew to 12 legends and 12 current players, and from there the idea to have 100 players sign as a truly historic tribute to 100 years came together. As for how

a project like Centennial ends up in final form, that is a story worth telling, but you will have to wait for the book.

Richard: With “Centennial,” was there official participation with the Canadiens organization to bring some of the players on board? Were they able to help you to get a couple guys you really wanted to be included?

Wess: The only participation I received from the Montreal Canadiens was a legal notice demanding I stop production of Centennial. I altered the print to alleviate their concerns, and that’s the extent of their participation.

Richard: Having to get 100 guys on board on your own must have been a challenge, but on the upside you got to spend some time with a lot of the all-time greats to wear the bleu, blanc, rouge – that must have been a great experience to hear the stories of some of these players.

Wess: That was one of the most enjoyable things about the project. Getting to listen to the stories, and



even better, listen to the players talking to one another and sharing laughs together. Some had not seen each other for DECADES! It was a pleasure to work with almost all the players, but I shared some great conversations with Jean Beliveau, Charlie Hodge, Bobby Smith, Ralph Backstrom, and again my mind starts racing, as most of the players are as classy as they come!

Richard: Of all the guys that you've worked with, Carey Price is probably the hottest current star. How did that relationship come about, and what has it been like to work with him over the course of his career?

Wess: I had my eye on him during his run at the World Juniors [in 2007], and then again during his AHL playoff run. A good friend of mine put me in touch with his agent that summer, and I signed him to a multi-year deal before he played one single NHL game. I just had a feeling. I am proud to call Carey a friend, and see BIG things in his future.

Richard: Price is usually described as a pretty calm and collected player on the ice, that doesn't let much get to him. Is he pretty much the same away from the rink?

Wess: He is much calmer off the ice if you can believe it.

Richard: You organized a huge public signing involving Price, Josh Gorges, and Maxim Lapierre last December. There was a lot of hype on Facebook and elsewhere – how many ended up turning out, and how much money was raised for the Children's Hospital?

Wess: We had about 1400 people attend. Not the biggest ever, but a great turnout. We raised over \$11,000.00 for charity!



[Click here to see highlights of the autograph signing.](#)

Richard: That's an amazing figure! It's got to be a very warming feeling to see the posts on Facebook and everywhere else and know that everybody comes away so happy from an event like that – what's it like to see a young child just beaming because they get to meet their heroes?

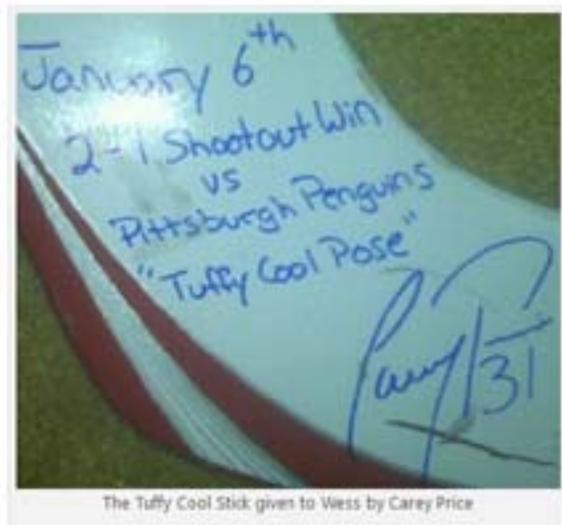
Wess: Everything happens pretty quick during an event, as it seems everyone and their uncle has a question for me during the event, so I don't get to enjoy things during the event as much as I would like to. But reading all the positive comments and feedbacks post-event make it all worth while.

Richard: I would be remiss if I didn't ask about the Tuffy Cool pose after the shootout win against Pittsburgh. How did that come about, and how long was it in the works?



Wess: LOL...Saw this coming. I was with Carey the weekend he did the Usain Bolt pose after he beat Tampa in a shootout a couple years ago.

I told him I think it would be sick to hit up the "B-Boy" or "Tuffy Cool" pose. Then the night before the [Pittsburgh] game I was talking with Carey and his girlfriend about the Tuffy Cool pose, and we all shared a laugh. Little did we know...



The Tuffy Cool Stick given to Wess by Carey Price

Richard: Which part of it surprised you more: seeing him actually do it, the acknowledgment of your role in it during his post-game interview, or the presentation of the stick?

Wess: What can I say, EVERYTHING surprised me! It's a moment I will cherish forever, and having Carey give me the stick when I went to his house just shows what a good friend he is.

Richard: When the media started talking about the pose, calling it cocky and even arrogant, what did you think seeing an inside joke between friends suddenly become a media kerfuffle and supposed extra motivation for the Penguins?

Wess: It was amusing to see how much heat it generated in the media. It seemed to take on a life of it's own for a few days.

Richard: Have you suggested to Carey that he and Fleury should do a tandem pose at the All-Star Game?

Wess: Nope. Personally I think it would have been cooler if Fleury came up with his own material. [Note: This interview was done the week before the All Star Game. During an in-game interview with CBC, Carey Price did mention that he and Fleury had talked about the pose and were thinking of doing it during the Elimination Shootout, but it never did come to pass]

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

Wess: Every once and a while I get to make the dreams of others become reality. That really is...PRICELESS.

Richard: Thanks very much for your time, Wess. It's been a pleasure!

For more information about StarSide Signatures, Iconic Dreams, and "Centennial" please click the following buttons.

MARCH 2011



I Met Carey Price and Friends Tonight by Patrick Leduc aka habsmtl09



Tonight was the event organized by StarSide which I won ticket for via an awesome SFC contest.

Here's a recap of the evening:

c_bass22 and I met around 5 PM near the entrance of the event, we waited in line and found out that they were selling pictures of the players signing for 10\$ and you could get extra autos at 20\$. We both got few extra pictures.

We then got in with our VIP passes and went straight in the line to get autographs. The players (Price, Ellers, Wiz, Moen, Gorges) were sitting together on the same table. Price had his mask from the Heritage Classic with him (Wasn't part of the auction after all, it was just rumors). He signed all 3 pictures with a nice and big autograph (he got better with his autos lately.) Then, Lars Eller, Wiz with a nice scar and black eye, Moen and Gorges (wow that's a nice picture!).

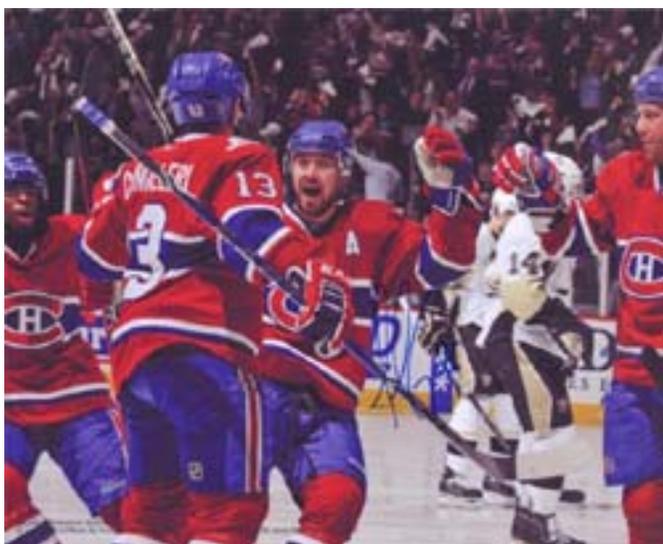


I took couple of picture of Sebastien with the players and left to see the silent auctions frames. They had few Crosby, Gretzky, Orr, Lemieux, Price frames. They also had some really nice Habs multi signed frames. Prices weren't bad but we didn't intend on buying anything at this point. We then started chatting with Andre (from A.L. collections) and we found out that they were a live auction scheduled to be starting at 19:30. We decided to go get few drinks and diner.

Prices weren't bad but we didn't intend on buying anything at this point. We then started chatting with Andre (from A.L. collections) and we found out that they were a live auction scheduled to be starting at 19:30. We decided to go get few drinks and diner.



We came back at the event at 19:30 flat. But we were quite surprised to see that the event was over. We talked again to Andre and found out that everybody left once the players had left. They decided to cancel the auction (apparently they had some really nice pieces). So for me, this has been a really nice evening (met a really nice guy, had good dinner and scored a few autographs).





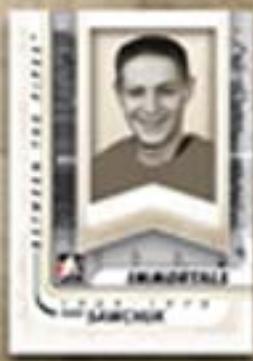
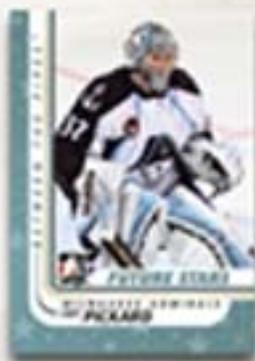
The Masked Men are Back!

BETWEEN THE PIPES™ 2010-11

Each box of 2010-11 Between The Pipes™ contains 18 packs with 9 cards per pack! This year's Between The Pipes™ features an amazing base card set, Game-Used Memorabilia cards and Authentic GoalieGraphs cards inserted 1:8 packs*. Back this year are the Non-Memorabilia insert sets featuring Masked Men III and the continuation of the year-long celebration – 100 Years of Card Collecting, all inserted 1:8 packs*. The He Shoots - He Saves Redemption Program is back where collectors can redeem 200 points for limited, game-used memorabilia cards not available in packs.

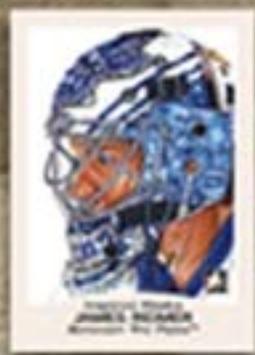
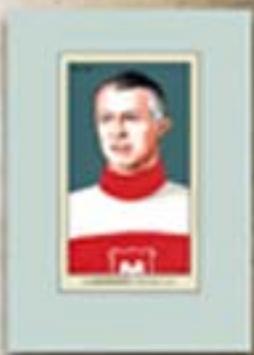
Base Cards

A 200 Base Card set with great subsets including: Future Stars, Immortals, Stars of the Game, Greats of the Game, Women of the Nets and One Game Wonders.



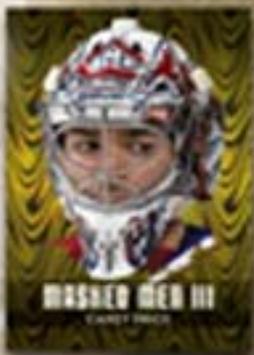
Non-Memorabilia Inserts (1:8 PACKS*)

There are 6 different Non-Memorabilia Insert sets to collect including 100 Years of Card Collecting, Deep In The Crease, Guarding the Bleu Blanc et Rouge Net, Guarding the Blue and White Net, Inspired Masks and Their Country's Finest.



Masked Men III (1:8 PACKS*)

Featuring the men behind the masks!





Fair or Foul

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma



On January 28-30, the NHL brought its All-Star spectacle to Raleigh, NC. The NHL Fan Fair is an event designed to bolster the relationship between the fans and the NHL. Between exhibits, games and players, tens of thousands flock to this yearly event. This year, I had a chance to be one of those fans. However, my experience began the previous night, thanks to a friendship with the wonderful people at Panini America.

That night, I was invited to join members of the Panini America staff at the Renaissance Hotel in Raleigh. My host was Marketing Manager Tracy Hackler. Many of the All-Stars were staying at this particular location. Panini and Upper Deck had an area set up in order to garner autographs of these players for past redemptions, future sets and giveaways. While most were on-card or swatch signatures, sticker sheets were in full effect as well. As I arrived and was escorted up to the second floor by Tracy, I noticed a familiar face. There was Oilers Rookie Taylor Hall signing items for Upper Deck. Hall, last year's top overall pick, seemed to be taking it all in but overwhelmed by what was presented to him to sign. I proceeded to hang out by the Panini area and was introduced to the first of many stars to stop by the tables. Dustin Byfuglien from the Thrashers sat down and it was apparent that he was tired, but he took it all in like a professional. What impressed me most about Byfuglien was how big he was without the pads. Most hockey players' size is a deception as the pads enhance the look.

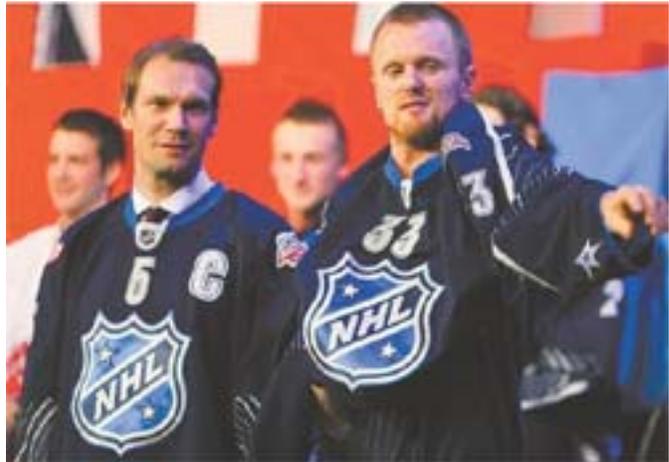
After Byfuglien finished up, Hall came by to do his part for Panini. It amazes me that these guys, especially the rookies, do not get constant writer's cramp when fulfilling their end of a signature agreement. Panini had Hall sign cards, stickers, pucks, 8x10s and All-Star logo swatches (which will be found in Dominion, slated for release in June 2011). Sadly for him, he went back over to Upper Deck only to resurface with four 1000-count boxes and a fifth box on top to take to his room to add his autograph on. While I understand that the rookies are in demand in products, it seems to be overkill to expect an athlete to sign that many items in the course of a day or two. In Hall's case, he had many obligations for the weekend and I'm sure wanted to enjoy himself. But I digress.

On Friday, the NHL Fan Fair opened its doors at 10 AM but not to the entire public. That was slated for 3pm. They open the doors early as a benefit to the local YMCA allowing youngsters the chance to be the first to enjoy the festivities that otherwise may not have the opportunity to attend. As I was unable to make it until 5pm, there's not really anything I can add to what took place during the morning. However, I received a phone call around noon that changed my overall plans for the weekend. Russ Cohen from Hockeyology.com contacted me in regards to All-Star Weekend. Due to a personal situation that the gentleman coming with him stayed behind to give his attention, he had a slot open to join him in covering the event. He offered it to me. While I already had the invite to be Panini's guest, I could not pass on this.

MARCH 2011



Later that afternoon, I made my way to the Raleigh Convention Center where the NHL Fan Fair was taking place. The city had blocked off some of the main roads in downtown Raleigh, but it was fairly easy to find a parking garage. Before entering the Convention Center, I made my way across the street to get my media credentials. As I entered the room, I tried to downplay my excitement but inside I was jumping for joy like a kid in a candy store. Once they handed me my badge with my picture on it, I knew it was going to be an amazing weekend. And as far as the media side of things went, it was a blast. But that's a story for another time.



Heading over to the NHL Fan Fair, I noticed some activities happening outside the building. There was a makeshift ice area where kids were able to partially slide down a hill. Up and down many blocks were heated walkways as it was cold and windy, well for the Raleigh area anyway. Pictures adorned many of the surrounding structures as well as the windows of the Convention Center. Larger than life photos of the players such as Eric Staal towered above everyone as they entered the facility. Walking in, I made my way to the Media Room in order to get a media pass. It allowed me to go in through a different entrance (which I discovered was the exit used for the Fan Fair) and avoid standing in line. However, I noticed the line was fairly short and I wanted to see what it was like to enter.

After passing the ticket scanners, I took the escalator down and my group was stopped right at the entrance. Music and strobe lights kicked up and I looked around to see if a polyester-clad John Travolta was going to come out and dance to "Stayin' Alive". While that didn't happen, a booming voice came through the speakers to announce that we were in store for an experience unlike any other. Did they get Jim Nantz to do this intro? Anyhow, we were allowed to proceed and were greeted by pictures on the wall of all the Guardians from the NHL and Stan Lee's Guardian Project. And of course, the first picture belonged to "The Hurricane", Carolina's own guardian. Once clear of the darkened hallway, bright lights greeted us as well as a wide-open area housing the NHL Fan Fair.

The first area I saw was the Hockey For Huggies booth. For those who haven't heard about this wonderful project, the NHL and Huggies have teamed up to help provide diapers for babies in the U.S. and Canada. During February, all teams are hosting diaper-drive events during home games. Fans can bring packages of Huggies diapers and drop them off or can text the name of their favorite team to 501501 in the United States or 20222 in Canada and that will lead to a \$5 donation per text to help



provide diapers within their communities. As for those attending the NHL Fan Fair, Huggies provided discount coupons to attendees who made a diaper or cash donation at the booth that could be used towards merchandise purchases online or at the NHL store on-site.

I looked to my left and saw a crowd of onlookers standing near some rafters. I quickly realized this is where the NHL Fantasy Draft was going to take place. Seeing the red and blue chairs adorning the back area looked vibrant from afar and built the anticipation of the live show that took place later that evening. As I left there, I saw many booths

that had three stations set up for people to try out various skills such as Accuracy Shooting, Precision Passing and One-Time Scoring. But the one I had to try out was the Hardest Shot. Much like the Super Skills event, a radar gun measures the speed of the shot. The record in the event at the time was 105.4 mph set by Boston's Zdeno Chara in 2008 (which he broke the next evening with a 105.9 mph shot). I am proud to report that my first shot registered 77.2 mph and my second hit 79.6 mph. Considering I've never actually tried to do it before, I was pleased with my results. I determine that it was more about technique than simple hitting power as I saw guys bigger and taller than me only get between 50-55mph on their shots.

Moving on, I walked over to the Locker Area. This was an area set up for fans to be able to dress up like some of the stars and have pictures taken. The most popular was Capitals superstar Alexander Ovechkin, which was a complete surprise considering that the Hurricanes fans boo him every chance they get. Just goes to show you that there was a mix of fans from all over and probably a mix of those who were not hockey fans, but recognized the name. I thought about dressing up and getting a photo, but passed as I figured I would have a chance later that weekend (which I never got).

Six Nintendo Wii game consoles were setup nearby giving kids and adults the chance to play NHL 2K11. You could tell right away that the adults were at a disadvantage as users had to play with the regular controller and the nunchuck. The kids did a better job with the hand-eye coordination and they were more into the game. In an eighties flashback, I saw one kid do the Pee Wee Herman "Tequilla" dance after scoring a goal using Jeff Carter of the Philadelphia Flyers. His mom was quite amused as was I.

In the middle of the action was a DJ surrounded on all four sides by huge hockey masks. There were twelve or so female dancers. Throughout their performances, various mascots made an appearance. Phoenix Coyote mascot Howler was the first to grace the crowd. Gnash (Nashville Predators) was out next and had a good time with the young fans wearing Hurricanes merchandise. To the dismay of some youngsters, Stormy (Hurricanes mascot) did not appear.



Two areas set up for the kids were tables featuring old-school hockey style foosball and a small arena to play floor hockey. It was humorous watching as most of them only wanted to shoot. The poor kids in goal would get upset as they had nothing to do as the puck never reached them. Even “teammates” would battle one another in order to shoot.

Eventually, I made my way to the Upper Deck and Panini booths. As I made my way to see the guys at Panini, I noticed this abnormally long line. My first thought was Jeff Skinner must still be signing for Upper Deck as he started at 4pm. I was wrong. The line was for people wanting to get their picture taken with the Stanley Cup. Surrounding the stage were all the major awards given out yearly by the NHL. Being a goalie fan, I just had to have my picture taken next to the Vezina Trophy. Sadly, the picture didn’t come out as good as I hoped. Above the Stanley Cup podium, there were two giant screens showing highlights of past players. I ended up watching two programs featuring Mario Lemieux and Patrick Roy.

Upper Deck was doing a Create Your Own Hockey Card promotion. Attendees were able to pose in front of a camera and the picture was superimposed onto a blank card. From my vantage point, this was a popular attraction as the line never died down. Outside the booth was a small statue of Sidney Crosby, which was weird considering Crosby was not involved in the game. As for cards, they were handing out special 3-card packs (3 different packs overall) to anyone who opened 3 packs of hockey product from 2010-11, not including Victory. If someone opened a box, they received a special three player card featuring Eric Staal, Cam Ward and Ron Francis.

Panini had a lot of goodies for people who stopped by the booth. They were giving out a free hockey sticker album along with a sheet of stickers. Also, they were inviting anyone to check out and play Panini Adrenalyn. Everyone who played got to keep the cards. There was a redemption program as well which caused some confusion. It seemed like there wasn’t a set way to hand out the 2-card redemption packs. For the most part, you received a redemption pack for every pack of Certified, three packs of Donruss and ten packs of Score (even though not originally listed) opened. In addition, Limited box openers received four packs. The redemption cards were primarily a mix of seven cards made specifically for the Fan Fair, though there were random autographs. The big one was a Hurricanes Logo Swatch Jeff Skinner on-swatch signature. A display case featured a multitude of encased 1/1s made for the show that was intended to be given away via box wars. Unfortunately, the box wars never took place even though they were advertised at the booth.

Conveniently, the back corner next to Upper Deck and Panini housed a few wax dealers. It ended up making for easy access to get product and to pick up the redemption. Prices were a bit higher than you would expect at a card show, but with a limited number of vendors and the price of setup, it was to be expected. It was easy to tell who were collectors and the ones who only wanted the redemption cards. Score was by the far the most popular product. There was an instance where a couple opened a pack of Certified and pulled a Zdeno Chara/Ray Bourque Dual Patch /25 and had no idea. They were only concerned with the redemption pack. Al Muir, Panini’s Hockey Product Manager, and I had to explain



what they had in their pack. As a card collector, it was disheartening.

I spent the rest of the evening watching the Fantasy Draft from the Panini booth. Tried to watch it by the rafters, but the crowd was around twenty deep and it was much easier to see it all unfold on the giant screens by the Stanley Cup. Since I was not at home, I have no idea how loud it was. However, when Staal selected Hurricane teammate Cam Ward with the first pick, it was deafening. But that was nothing in comparison to when he chose teammate Jeff Skinner. It was so loud and thunderous that you could

feel the floor vibrating. Considering it was a cement floor, you can imagine the amount of noise that would take. And that wrapped up my eventful Friday at the Fan Fair.

I did not get to spend much time there on Saturday or Sunday, but a couple of quick notes. When I arrived on Saturday, I went in about ten minutes after it opened to the public. I decided to check out the NHL store for the All-Star Jerseys. To get one without any numbers or nameplates, it was \$100. For an extra \$125-\$150, you could have a player's name and number embroidered. The befuddling thing was that the Eric Staal jerseys had already sold out. I can accept that considering he is the hometown hero, but not within the first ten minutes. Then I saw the reason why. There were vendors and their kids walking around wearing the jerseys. To me, that was completely unfair to the general public.

Taylor Hall, Tyler Seguin and Jamie McBain made appearances at the Panini booth for autograph signings. All three were congenial and had a great time, especially entertaining the kids. The unfortunate part was that around a quarter of the people standing in line had no idea who Hall or Seguin was. This really came to light when a couple was standing next to me and asked, "Who is that?" When informed it was #1 Overall Pick Taylor Hall, they walked off to stand in line and I heard one of them remark that they should be able to sell the autographs for good money on eBay.

Continuing the theme of not recognizing the NHL players, I went outside to see what was going on in the streets. While walking down one block, I noticed a guy buying a hot sausage from a vendor. I did a double take as I knew the guy looked familiar. Sure enough, it was Patrik Elias of the New Jersey Devils, which was corroborated by a local radio personality. What struck me the most was that no one approached him at all, which signaled to me they didn't know who he was. He did manage to look over at me and I smiled while giving a quick nod to let him know I knew who he was. He returned the gesture.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience. As a sports fan, being surrounded by this type of fanfare as well as the players is an opportunity you must take advantage. As a collector, there was a sense of letdown mostly due to the sheer number of people opening packs and boxes simply for the freebies and could not care less about the cards they revealed. The NHL and the city of Raleigh did an outstanding job putting on this festival. I look forward to the next time I get a chance to do it all again.

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One on One with Tracy Hackler
by Tony Joyce aka Enigma

There are a handful of names that are synonymous with the sports card industry. One of those names belongs to Panini's Tracy Hackler. Tracy is the Marketing Manager for Panini America. With an extensive background in writing and sports cards, he is a wealth of knowledge. While at the 2011 NHL Fan Fair in Raleigh, NC, I had the opportunity to meet the man behind the myth.

Q: Where are you from?

A: Arlington, Texas. Actually, I have lived in the area all my life.

Q: Growing up, what were your favorite sport and player?

A: Football. As a Broncos fan, I would say John Elway was and still is my favorite player. In fact, my oldest son's middle name is Elway.

Q: To be in this industry this long, I assume you collected cards as a kid?

A: Yes. I began at the age of seven and have been immersed by sports cards ever since.

Q: How long have you been in the industry?

A: Ever since the summer of 1995. Started out as an intern at Beckett and became full-time soon thereafter.

Q: What is your current job title and role?

A: I am a Marketing Manager with Panini America. I handle hobby marketing and work with various web sites, card shops and distributors.

Q: So The Knight's Lance (Official Panini Blog) is your pride and joy?

A: Yes. I love to be able to work on that daily and provide the videos and information you see.

Q: Who is your favorite person to open a box with?

A: Wow! Good question. There are a lot of them as each adds something different. But to name someone, I would say Scott Prusha for sure, Tim Trout is great and even Chris Olds. What I really like to do is bring the Product Development team into the mix as most people have no idea who this group is or the tasks they handle. They are the unsung heroes of the company.

Q: There will always be complaints among hobby enthusiasts. What aspects do you like the most and in turn dislike the most about today's hobby?

A: Creativity and content. When I collected as a kid, you were limited on what you could get out of a pack of cards. If you would have told me then that I would have a chance to own a piece of a player's jersey, I would have called you crazy. It is definitely more expensive to obtain the cards, packs and boxes now as compared to back then. However, you can collect what you want much easier. Whether it's a set or player, there's something for everyone.

Q: What do you like to do away from the industry?



A: Spend time with my kids. I enjoy coaching youth sports, watching videos and the UFC.

Q: UFC? Who is your favorite MMA star?

A: Well, if I had to choose one, it would have to be Matt Hughes when he was really active. But I do think that Jon Jones is the future. Kid's a beast.

Q: You've been in the industry for over fifteen years. What would be doing if you were not in this line of work?

A: I started out writing for newspapers. I know that seems to be drying up, but I would say something in the journalism field.

Q: OK, enough serious talk. Let's have some fun. What is your favorite type of music?

A: I have an eclectic taste. I enjoy anything from hip hop to country music.

Q: Favorite artist?

A: You mean musically? (I nod yes) Hmm. Let's go with Eminem.

Q: What was the last book you read?

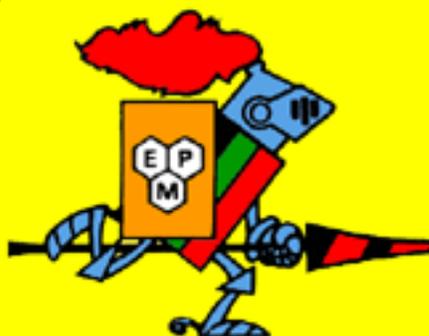
A: The Life of Reilly. You know the book about some of his best stories and articles.

Q: If you could choose three people, past or present, to join you for a round of golf, who would they be?

A: A golf foursome? Good question. Would have to go with Elway as he seems to be decent at golf, much better than me. And I would go with Tim Tebow. That way I would have the past and present quarterbacks of the Broncos together. Finally, I don't know. Eminem maybe? No, change that. Make it Rick Reilly.

Q: Harry Potter or Twilight?

A: Never seen either one. My wife has seen them all, but I haven't.



PANINI



Al Muir – Hockey Guru
By Tony Joyce aka Enigma



Hockey aficionados know that there are a limited number of go-to people when it comes to sports cards. At the 2011 NHL Fan Fair, I had the wonderful pleasure of meeting one of them. Al Muir's history in hockey cards, well hockey in general, is well-known. Between stints with Sports Illustrated, Beckett and now Panini America, there is no questioning Al's hockey acumen. The Windsor, Ontario, native took a few minutes out of a frenetic weekend to chat.

Q: As you have stated many times this weekend, you are from Windsor, Ontario. What is the hockey life like up there?

A: It's like it would be anywhere in Canada. The area loves its hockey. The Spitfires have been playing well the last few years and that increases the love. But overall, it's not any bigger than most areas of Canada.

Q: Obviously hockey was and still is your sport of choice. Who was your favorite player growing up?
A: Bobby Orr. He is the reason I am a Bruins fan. Funny thing is, because of the opportunities my jobs have provided, I have been fortunate to talk to numerous hockey players. But I've never actually met him.

Q: Was there any ridicule growing up being a Bruins fan instead of following a Canadian team?
A: Not really. In that area, there are of course a lot of Leafs and Montreal fans as well as the (Red) Wings. I would say that Boston is the fourth most popular team in Windsor.

Q: Like most in the industry, I'm sure you were a card collector growing up.
A: Yes. I can remember having a dollar in my pocket on a Saturday and riding my bike with friends to the local store. I would open the ten packs and chew the gum and enjoy seeing the players in my hand.

Q: How long have you been within this industry?
A: I started with Beckett in 1991 and three months later, I became a full-time market analyst.

Q: What is your current job title and function?
A: I am the Hockey Brand Manager with Panini America. My focus is on the conceptualization, cre
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ation and realization of hockey cards for Panini. With Panini being new to hockey, this offers a fun but unique challenge. However, I do enjoy it very much.

Q: What do you enjoy most about the hobby/industry?

A: Going around to card shows and seeing the collectors first-hand. Hockey collectors are a different breed than other sports. You see them walk up with want lists in hand and a focus on set building. They love to build sets and I'm able to connect with them on that level.

Q: What do you do in your spare time?

A: I am the official scorer for the Dallas Stars. I enjoy coaching youth hockey. Pretty much, my life is centred around hockey in some fashion.

Q: What would you be doing if not working with Panini?

A: Well, I did write for years for Sports Illustrated. So I would say something journalism related.

Q: Now you can relax and have a little fun. What's your favorite movie?

A: Jaws.

Q: The original?

A: There is only one.

Q: What would be your dream vacation spot?

A: That's tough since I've been able to go everywhere I've wanted to. I would say Aruba. Yeah, really like Aruba.

Q: Facebook or Twitter?

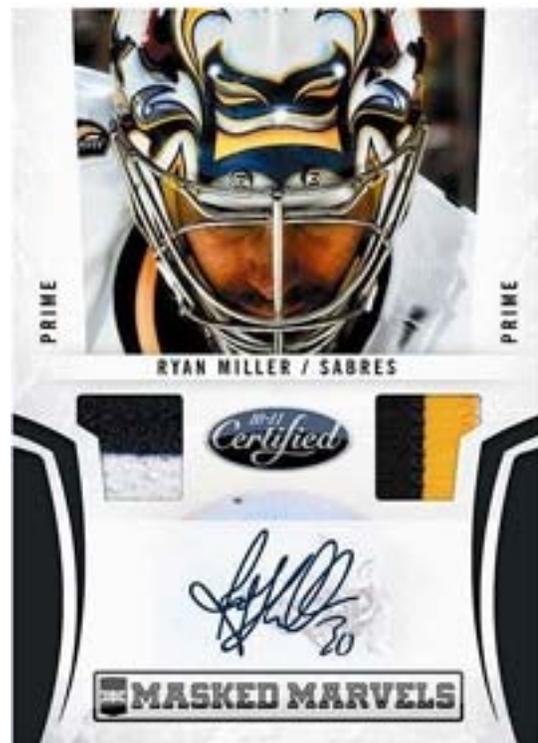
A: Don't really care about either.

Q: Finally, of which are you a bigger fan, Miley Cyrus or Taylor Swift?

A: Don't really follow either one, but if I had to choose then it would be Taylor Swift. Only because she is a hockey fan.

Q: Future Fans Of The Game star?

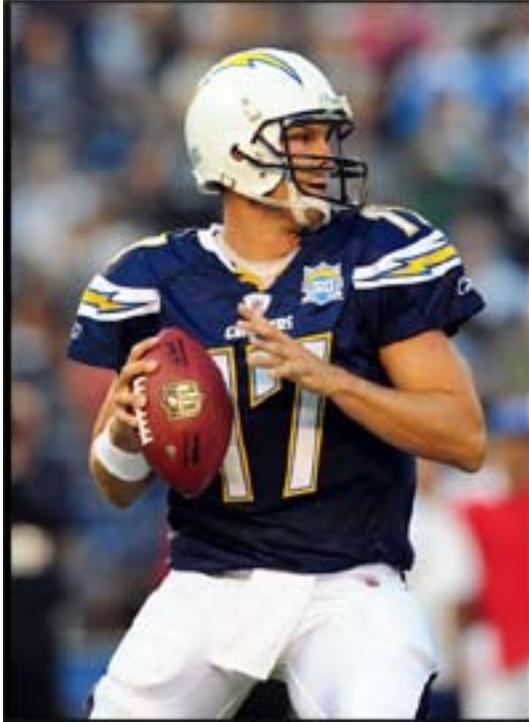
A: Working on it.





Everyone Dies but How Many of us Truly Live?

By Thomas Gast aka munchiesthemonkey



This year the champions will be...(insert your favorite team name here). Every single year just like last year. Some of you reading this understand heartache, the flood of emotions felt so deep for want of the ultimate prize, but year after year your consolation prize is defeat – the type of dejected feelings reserved for the poor kid picked last when choosing soft ball teams in elementary school. The hurt is a rare kind of pain felt deep in your core being, yet no medication can be prescribed to alleviate your sorrow.

My San Diego Chargers. You heard it right, of course I don't own the team. What I own is the blood, the sweat, the tears of another losing season. I dry the tears that stream like blood from a wound down my face. I think to myself, Lord when will it be my time? So many years have passed me by. Also an equal amount of teams with a wide assortment of players good and beyond bad come to mind. The good: Dan Fouts, Charlie Joiner, Kellen Winslow, Fred Dean, John Jefferson, Chuck Muncie, who can forget the era of Air Coryell. The beyond bad: Craig Whelihan, Ryan Leaf, getting stomped by the 49ers in the Superbowl so

hard the earthquake could be felt in China. I recall "We Believe" signs in windows, painted on cars, on banners in restaurants, they were everywhere. Upon closer inspection the fine print below read "in the Easter Bunny, Boogeyman, Tooth Fairies and Bigfoot."

The present era of the Chargers is loaded with spectacular talent. Philip Rivers is a monster that led the league with 4,710 passing yards and a 101.8 QB rating. Besting the likes of Peyton Manning, Drew Brees, Matt Schaub, and Eli Manning. Other stand-outs include Antonio Gates, Vincent Jackson, Shaun Phillips, Darren Sproles, and promising rookie Ryan Mathews. They have been called the best worst team, a group of sad underachievers. My Chargers, you heard me right, mine because I have been through the best and the worst of times and always and forever will I have their back, my support and my deep admiration and love are unbreakable chains, ties that bind my prayers and faith in a solid victory next year. I don't need a sign in my window to affirm my belief that next year is ours finally.

Growing up with the fortune of seeing Dan Fouts pass for over 400 yards in a game with multiple receivers with over 100 yards, it was incredible and spectacular. Experiences like that never fade from memory. The hot dogs we ate drowned in sweet relish, mustard and ketchup were to die for. The tailgate parties with carne asada, burgers, chips, sneaking sips of my Pop's beer, while listening to Journey and Def Leppard, Van Halen (not Van Hagar), and who can forget Styx and even AC/DC. Me

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and cousin Clyde sporting mullets, Levi's jackets, bandannas on our legs & necks. Our huge party with neighborhood friends and more importantly their daughters. The sister of one of the guys came along, I had a heart aching crush on her. It was a time of innocence, a transition into manhood, with football right in the middle of it. During home games we didn't attend, it was BBQ time at someone's house. Pass the deviled eggs, man do I love those things. Memories of growing up, friendships formed, many first experiences like a first kiss, my first beer, football was the cement that built the bridges that will stand the test of time, the catalyst that begins the trip down fond recollections.

Next year the champions will be the San Diego Chargers. Destiny is a mighty powerful force to be reckoned with. Regardless of the odds, the injuries, and the losses of coaching staff to other teams we will prevail. The San Diego Super Chargers will be super again. As new chapters are written into memory and new lessons about life are learned through experience, football will always be there to bring us together. I believe. I believe, and we are already half way there.



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The Problem with Baseball Is that it's too Slow

By Jacob Bogardus aka JPBbaseball1322

I'm a baseball purist. I love the sport. I believe it is the American pastime and have no problems sitting through a three and a half hour game. However, as a baseball lover, I also understand that the pace of the game is one of the reasons that a lot of people can't sit through an entire game and follow the sport throughout the year. I want this to change. I want people to be able to enjoy baseball, so I am going to act as the commissioner of baseball for the next few paragraphs, and make three suggestions as to how we could speed up the game without dramatically changing the product.

1) Batters may not step out of the batter's box between pitches

played baseball, I get it, players want to keep blood circulating, want to get the signs, get situated in the box, adjust their batting gloves among other things, and then hit. This seems harmless, but it takes up so much time in a game it's unbelievable. So my first rule change is a simple one, players cannot step out of the batter's box. Of course there would be a few conditions that would merit a batter taking time out of the box such as when a player is injured (i.e. foul ball off of foot) or in save situations from the 8th inning on. Breaking this rule will warrant a penalty. Each team will receive one warning upon breaking the rule for the first time in a game, and for each subsequent time the batter who breaks the rule will receive a strike added to the count. If it happens to be the third strike, the batter is out, and if it happens to be the third out, the inning is over.

2) A pitch clock

Similar to a shot clock in basketball, a pitch clock would be instituted in order to speed pitchers up on the mound. Throughout the decade of the 2000s average time between pitches was approximately 26.3 seconds. Now part of this is obviously waiting for the batter to be ready, so rule change #1 will help slightly reduce this time. However at 27 seconds per pitch, and approximately 250 pitches a game, you are talking about just short of 2 hours of "game time" being spent on waiting for the pitcher to throw the ball. I would suggest a 20 second pitch clock to be instituted. With this pitch clock, if pitchers were to take the full 20 seconds every time, you would be saving 6 seconds per pitch, or almost a 25 minutes per game. Again, like with rule change #1 there would be certain times when the pitch clock would not be in effect. I would propose that again, in the 8th inning or later in games that are being decided by 3 runs or less, the pitch clock would not be used. However, while the pitch clock is active, there will obviously be some penalties for a time violation. My suggestion would be that each team gets one time violation warning. After the warning any violation will act as if the pitcher threw a ball. If it is the 4th ball of the at-bat it is a walk and any appropriate runners advance just as normal.

3) Limited catcher visits to the mound

Currently the catcher can essentially visit the mound whenever he wants. Being a baseball purist, many of these times are understandable, whether it is to talk about the next pitch or to change the signs because a runner has reached base, many of these visits are necessary, however some of them can definitely be avoided. As commissioner I would propose that the catcher is allowed only one visit to the



mound per inning. If he is to visit a second time the pitcher must be removed from the game. Similar to rules 1 and 2, this rule also comes with the amendment that in a close game (3 runs or less) after the 8th inning, catchers will be allowed two mound visits per inning with the third mound visit being the one in which the pitcher must be removed. It is important to note that visits to the mound by coaches in which the catcher also attends do not count as catcher visits to the mound. Mound visits by coaches will continue to follow the current rules which are the same as my newly proposed catcher rules. A coach can visit the mound for any one pitcher once per inning and upon the second visit in the inning the pitcher must be removed (covered by rule 8.06).

Baseball is a great game, but with games lasting an average 2 hours and 50 minutes, we need to try to reduce game time to attract more casual fans. The three rules above really should not make the game any different than it already is today, and certainly should not change the outcomes of games. Rule changes 1 and 2 go hand in hand, keeping the batters in the box will allow the pitchers to work slightly faster, and having a pitch clock on the pitcher will keep them on a good pace with the threat of penalty. Limiting catcher visits to the mound in a similar way to which the league already limits coach visits to the mound will also speed up the game. With all of this being considered, I believe you are looking at on average 20-25 minutes saved per game. In the big picture, that makes your average game about 2 and one half hours, instead of 3, and gives the game a better flow and pace throughout the game. These changes may seem drastic at first, but in time I believe people will see that these rules will not change the game, and will help cater to the more casual fan, which will help to further expand baseball's fan base and keep it as America's past time.





The Worst Thing About the NHL Is the Officiating
by Richard McAdam aka RGM81

Hockey is an amazing game to watch. The speed, the skill, the drama, the personalities (as long as they're not rookies or goalies), and the intensity are a pure joy to behold. Nowhere is this truer than in the National Hockey League, the premier professional hockey league in North America and indeed the world. The best players from all over the globe dream of playing in the NHL and competing for the Stanley Cup. The constant tinkering with the game's rules has allowed for continuous product improvement that makes the game more exciting for fans to watch. Since the lockout, the clutching and grabbing and trapping that stifled offensive creativity and dulled fans to sleep has been shoved aside, making the game better in every facet. The NHL has changed the rules about hooking and holding, made goaltending equipment smaller, prevented teams from buying championships via the salary cap, and removed the red line to open up the offence.



Except for one. The one area of the game that has remained the same old inexcusable weakness has been the officiating. Referees continue to exercise poor judgment, to make incomprehensible calls, and still are not held publicly accountable for their mistakes. In every other professional sport, officials go under the spotlight and have to defend their actions. In hockey—at least, in the NHL—they do not, and because of the incompetence and lack of accountability they hold back the NHL from being an even better representation of the best game on ice. In most sports, the best referees are the ones that are more-or-less anonymous. If you don't know their name, it's generally a good thing. While some of the elite officials in other leagues do get recognition for having served the game for a long time, the basic rule of thumb is that if you know an official by name it is for a very bad reason. In the National Football League, Ed Hochuli is a very well-known official for two reasons: his physique rivals that of many players, and for a couple of sensational blown calls. In Major League Baseball, Jim Joyce was a relatively anonymous (yet lauded) umpire since 1987, a run of 23 years, before becoming infamous for costing Detroit Tigers pitcher Armando Galarraga a perfect game with a blown call. When the officials become the story of a game, something has gone

horribly wrong.

The National Hockey League, and its fans, have for decades been witnesses to referees' actions deciding the outcomes of games. I am not saying that NHL referees are biased or deliberately displaying favouritism to one team over others, as LA Kings GM Dean Lombardi did after a recent loss. For those



who are unaware, Lombardi stated that the decision-maker on goals subject to video review wanted to be the GM for the Kings and because he did not get the job; “You have to assume you are going to get those type of calls” going against the Kings. I do not subscribe to the tin foil hat theories about certain teams getting preferential treatment. Rather, I believe that there simply is a tremendous level of incompetence in NHL officiating. Certainly there are many incidents that one can point to that support this claim. The legendary Don Koharski-Jim Schoenfeld “Have another donut” incident was brought on by the coach’s belief that Koharski called a terrible game. The mere mention of the name Kerry Fraser raises the blood pressure of Toronto Maple Leafs supporters still angry over the non-call on Wayne Gretzky in the 1993 Western Conference Finals. Ever since he called ten straight penalties against the Montreal Canadiens in a game against the Minnesota Wild, Chris Lee has received the ire of Habs fans whenever he officiates a Canadiens game. A Florida Panthers-Toronto Maple Leafs game went in the Leafs’ favour after enforcer Colton Orr ran over Florida’s netminder Scott Clemmensen and no call was made; Orr was able to put the puck into the open net to give the Leafs the win. The list of examples could go on for pages, enough to fill up an entire book.

Part of the problem, at least from this fan’s perspective, is that there is no public accountability for NHL officials. They are stringently protected by the NHL, arguably better than the players. If a player or coach criticizes a bad call or a poor performance, they get fined heavily; on more than one occasion, a fine for criticizing an NHL official has been higher than that for a sucker-punch or other infraction resulting in injury to another player. Earlier I mentioned Ed Hochuli and Jim Joyce—when these officials made their respective errors, both of them faced the media and public discipline from their respective leagues. Hochuli had his status downgraded and was not permitted to officiate key playoffs games that year. Joyce was tearful and utterly remorseful in his acknowledgment that “I just cost that kid a perfect game.” The latter’s candor earned him the respect of many who were previously outraged at his blunder. In all my years of watching hockey, I have never seen an NHL official stand before a podium and acknowledge a blown call or costly error that affected the outcome of a hockey game. I have no recollection of the NHL publicly castigating an NHL referee for a mistake. Without public accountability, the problem will continue.

I understand that hockey is a very fast game, and things happen instantaneously, leaving referees with only split-seconds to make a decision. Yet the volume and magnitude of the poor decisions leave a very lasting impression upon fans and actual games. We have all seen on many occasions flagrant tripping or high-sticking fouls not get called early in a game, yet when the score is 2-2 and there are only 3 minutes left in the 3rd period, a very weak or even “phantom” call will be made, and the beneficiaries of the power play will inevitably score the winning goal soon after. The inconsistency in calling infractions leaves fans furious, and one only need to look at the amount of garbage thrown on the ice or visit a team’s official online message board during a game to see the vitriolic reactions to such terrible calls. While many of the reactions are over the top in their excess, there is a legitimate gripe on some level with the poor calls that are made that have an effect on the game’s final outcome.

All of this begs the question: what can the NHL do to improve officiating?



Coming Soon?



The NHL has some ability to intervene into a situation and overrule an incorrect call if a controversial goal is scored—but even on those most crucial matters, there are still a number of situations in which the referee’s initial verdict is final. How many times have we seen a loose puck in the crease get tapped into the net, but the play is blown dead because the official “thinks” that the goalie has the puck? If a player is offside, but the call is missed, and the play results in a goal there is nothing that can be done to review the play and overturn the incorrect call. There has to be a way that the flawed human judgment can be remedied if the wrong call is made. This has led to many in the hockey community calling for a coach’s challenge, similar to what is used in football, to be introduced on plays in which a goal is scored or waved off. By interjecting a different set of eyes into the ruling, the review of a coach’s challenge can go a long way in ensuring that the right calls get made. Those split-second decisions can be overruled if they are found to be incorrect. The scope and scale of the coach’s challenge concept is something to be worked out by the League, and goes beyond the scope of this article.

The most important step needed to improve the officiating in the NHL is that the League must force its referees to be accountable in public. They must remove the shield protecting referees from even the most minute amount of criticism from players and coaches. If a coach crosses a line and descends into spouting conspiracy theories, as Lombardi did, of course they can still be subject to a fine. But the present system essentially forbids any and all mention of a referee’s decision or action without being penalized by the League. Within minutes of a game’s conclusion, the media are allowed into the teams’ dressing rooms to interview players who are still steaming over the way a game’s outcome was determined—of course there are going to be incidents where heated athletes will utter some charged and provocative comments. Coaches have to do post-game conferences to discuss the game, and inevitably there will be a question about an official. It is amazing the effect that knowing you have to step in front of a microphone and explaining your behaviour after the game is over can have on a person. Yet there is no such conference or media availability for the referees. Players are accountable for their actions on the ice and their words off the ice, yet those who police the players are not. This is a massive incongruity and it must be changed. Until NHL referees are held accountable for their actions, they will continue to operate with impunity and be above reproach.

NHL officials are for the most part good at what they do. They work hard and are devoted to remaining objective and fair. They do not get paid large amounts of dollars that those whom they police receive. I do not believe that they are out to “get” players as Alex Burrows alleged last year vis-à-vis Stephane Auger. When we do not notice the referees, it means that they have done a good job. Most games we do not notice them other than the odd eye-rolling experience of seeing both players lined up to take a faceoff getting kicked out for some minor violation. However, the times that we do notice them are for some truly egregious errors that have a direct influence on a game’s final score. Unfortunately for the NHL, its fans, and its players, this happens far too often, and until change happens the officials will remain the worst thing about the NHL.

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SCF Mythbusters: Shipping using Plain White Envelopes (Part 1 of 2)

By Scott Kozlowski aka scottkoz20

From time to time when browsing various forums and posts, I will see some signature from some members that state some information about shipping using a Plain White Envelope (PWE). Some of the verbiage states “If you ship in a PWE, I will return the card” or “If you use a PWE, I will not trade with you”.

In general, shipping using a PWE is frowned upon, but not against the rules. Specifically, on sportscardforum.com, the only item that mentions something about shipping comes with a 5 point infraction. This infraction states that “Bad packaging/shipping causing the cards to arrive damaged (It is your responsibility to make sure cards are sent safely and securely)”. The rule itself makes no reference to how you ship, just that the card or cards arrive safely.

So if shipping using a PWE is frowned upon, why do some people do this? In my experience, it comes to 2 main reasons. The first reason has to do with the experience level of the trade. Some newer traders simply do not think about or are educated in respect to different types of shipping methods and/or specifically using different shipping products, like a bubble mailer. The other big reason I have found is using a PWE to ship can save a member on average \$1.50 to \$2 per trade! They only need a stamp that costs 44 cents to ship a card in a PWE as oppose to almost a \$1.40 to ship in a bubble mailer. The PWE costs a \$1 for a pack of 80 whereas a bubble mailer can cost 59 cents or more for 1, depending on where you purchase your bubble mailer.

Now I know that there are plenty of members that are reading this article thinking that they rarely have any issues when making a trade using a PWE. Others, including myself, could tell you horror stories about getting a card in a PWE. Personally, I am not a fan of shipping using a PWE. I believe that the extra cost of investing in bubble mailers and additional shipping is worth the effort. However, is there any hard data to prove or disprove shipping using a PWE is harmful to cards?

I have never seen or read information on this topic. I was interested to see what the results would be if I sent out a bunch of cards to users using a PWE. So, I asked SCF members if they would be willing to help out in this project by receiving cards in a PWE. I found 14 members that were willing to help out. The members live as close as 1 town over from me in Western New York State, to as far away as the Pacific Northwest.

Method Used

Each of the members that volunteered will be receiving 3 envelopes. In the envelopes they will find a single card. 14 of these envelopes will have no protection at all for the card, 14 more envelopes will only have a penny sleeve protecting the card and the last 14 envelopes will contain a card inside of a penny sleeve and top loader. In addition, half of the envelopes have included a “Do Not Bend” marking on the envelope while the other half of the envelopes will not.

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The breakdown of the 42 envelopes looks like this:

- 7 envelopes with a card that has no protection and no “Do Not Bend” marking
- 7 envelopes with a card that has no protection and has a “Do Not Bend” marking
- 7 envelopes with a card that has penny sleeve protection and no “Do Not Bend” marking
- 7 envelopes with a card that has penny sleeve protection and has a “Do Not Bend” marking
- 7 envelopes with a card that has a top loader and penny sleeve protection and no “Do Not Bend” marking
- 7 envelopes with a card that has a top loader and penny sleeve protection and has a “Do Not Bend” marking

What I have asked each of my volunteers to do is, when they receive their cards, to please scan or photograph the card and include any damage they see to the card.

Expected Results

My hypothesis for this experiment will be:

All 7 envelopes with a card that has no protection and no “Do Not Bend” marking will have some damaged.

All 7 envelopes with a card that has penny sleeve protection and no “Do Not Bend” marking will have some damaged.

All 7 envelopes with a card that has a top loader and penny sleeve protection and no “Do Not Bend” marking will have some damaged.

4 of the 7 envelopes with a card that has no protection and has a “Do Not Bend” marking will have some damaged.

3 of 7 envelopes with a card that has penny sleeve protection and has a “Do Not Bend” marking will have some damaged.

None of the 7 envelopes with a card that has a top loader and penny sleeve protection and has a “Do Not Bend” marking will be damaged.

I’m predicting that 2/3rd of the envelopes sent out will be damaged at some point in the trip from my house to the SCF member’s house. While the data sample size is fairly small, I believe this can help prove or disprove the notation about using PWE’s will damage cards.

So what are the results? Check back next month for Part 2 of this article.



Dustin Penner to the Kings: Who Won the Trade?

By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan



February 28th, 2011 was the latest instalment of the NHL's annual trade deadline. By 3:00 PM EST 16 trades, involving 35 players and 12 draft picks, were made. With over 20 deals completed in the month leading up to the deadline, this edition was a little slower than normal (as most experts had predicted).

Most of the deals involved depth players and minor leaguers, many that we're likely to never hear from again. A few notable players like Jason Arnott, Max Lapierre, and Chris Higgins were dealt, but the 2011 deadline will certainly be most remembered for its biggest deal: Dustin Penner to the Los Angeles Kings.

The Edmonton Oilers traded their 2009-10 leader in points (63) and goals (32) for a package of Draft Picks, and Prospects.

Tied for the team lead in goals this season (21) and just a good game back in points (39, vs Ales Hemsky's 42) it couldn't have been an easy decision, and certainly makes the Oilers a weaker team for the balance of this season, and likely next.

But that doesn't mean it wasn't worth it.

The return for Penner was Los Angeles' 2011 first round draft pick, a conditional 3rd round pick in 2012, and 2008 first round pick Colten Teubert, who the Kings selected 13th overall. (The condition on the 2012 pick has been reported that if the Kings win the Stanley Cup, the pick becomes a second round selection).

From the Kings point of view, this one is a no brainer. They get a big left winger, that can score. Something they needed. They trade a bit of the future, but likely future they don't really need; considering the relative youth of their current roster, and the depth of their minor league system. This can only improve their chances to win the club's first ever Stanley Cup, both this year and next.

On paper, it looks like the Oilers have done a very good job at asset management. Penner was acquired with an infamous offer sheet in the summer of 2007. When the Ducks (coming off a Stanley Cup win, were pushed to the limit of the Salary Cap) failed to match the Oiler's offer of \$21.5 million over 5 years, the RFA became property of the Oilers in exchange for their First, Second, and Third round draft picks.

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Looking at the deal from an asset point of view, the Oilers dealt picks from rounds 1, 2, and 3, and have picks in the 1st and 3rd, plus a former 1st in return. Not a bad job at all.

However, when you look at what they actually got, versus what they actually gave up, I'm not so sure. In Penner the Oilers have moved a 6'4" left winger, who can be counted on to score 30(ish) goals per season. The exact kind of player that every team goes looking for this time of year, and very few can get a hold of. He's got size, and he can score.

They get back a defenseman who is just as big, and has a mean streak, but Colten Teubert hasn't progressed nearly as quickly as his peers.

Other 2008 drafted blue liners include Drew Doughty, Zach Bogosian, Alex Pietrangolo, Luke Schenn, Tyler Myers (all taken ahead of him) and Erik Karlsson, Luca Sbisa, Michael Del Zotto, and John Carlson (all taken after him).



Colten Teubert - Future Star, or 1st Round Bust?

This isn't to say that Teubert won't develop into a bonifide NHL player, but having been a healthy scratch with the AHL's Manchester Monarchs (on several occasions) this year, does make me wonder. In theory he'll develop into a nice 2nd pairing defenceman; great at the physical and shut down type play, and able to chip in a few goals here and there.

The first round pick they got will likely end up in the 20-25 range. Currently sitting 5th in the West, the addition of Penner should prove big enough to make sure the Kings hold onto that spot, at minimum, and maybe even more up. A playoff run where they win at least one round should be considered (at this point) likely.

So what kind of player can the Oilers expect to get with a pick in that range? Their own most recent example is Jordan Eberle (22nd overall in 2008), but players of that calibre don't usually get selected that late. Oilers fans should hope it's not a player like 2007 first rounder, 21st overall, Riley Nash (who is yet to play an NHL game, and has already left the organization). What they should probably expect is something similar to 2005 first round pick, Andrew Coglian, who was selected 25th overall.

A decent player, a legit NHLer for sure. One who brings some decent skills to the table, but whose never been (and likely never will be) particularly spectacular.



When you consider 2nd and 3rd round picks are even bigger crap shoots than 1st rounders, let's not bother debating what kind of player the 52nd overall pick may become.

So really what did the Oilers get? They picked up a player who may turn out to be a solid 2nd pairing defenseman, a pick that will hopefully turn out to be a useful role player, and another pick that's unlikely to have much of an impact at the NHL level.

In Penner, they gave up one of their best players. One of their very few big players. A Stanley Cup winner, a veteran, and a leader in their young dressing room. The type of player they'll be looking for in 3 years, when they're supposed to be ready to contend.

Maybe Oilers General Manager Steve Tambellini knew something that the rest of us don't, and was dealing with the realization that Penner would have left as an unrestricted free agent after the 2011-12 season. One of the organization's prized assets was only going to be worth less next year, before he got nothing at all. Maybe this was the best return he'd get from an asset that was only diminishing in value.

I just have a hard time letting a GM off the hook like that, especially when you see that the Toronto Maple Leafs got a near identical package for blueliner (and true 'rental' player) Thomas Kaberle.

Who won the trade? Truth is, only time will tell. We'll have to see how the futures the Oilers have acquired pan out; but as the old saying goes..... "Whoever gets the best player, wins the trade". I'll be shocked if Penner isn't the best player that comes from this deal.



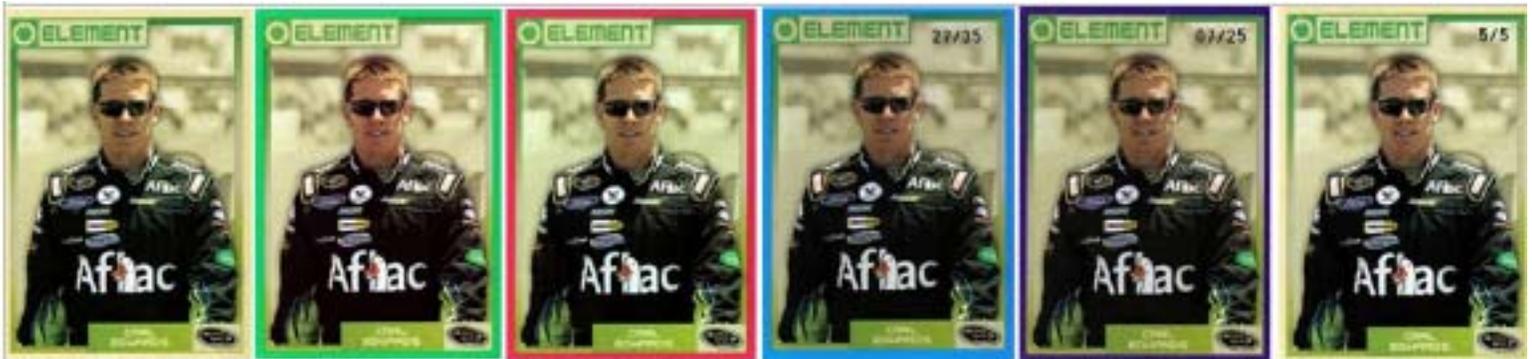
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Collecting in a Parallel Universe By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy

It is something all collectors are faced with. Some love it. Some despise it. It is the world of parallel cards. The racing hobby is no different but within the last two years the sheer amount of parallels being produced has increased enough to create a healthy debate amongst racing collectors. The question is being asked; when is enough actually enough? Other sports collectors have been dealing with this issue for years (refractor, x-fractor, gold, holofoil, blue, black border, rainbow border, etc) and it seems that racing has again caught up when it comes to this trend.

Is the number of parallels being produced (up to 6 or 7 variations for some releases plus press plates) a good thing for the hobby? It depends on who you ask. Collectors seem split. Those who are set collectors and driver collectors who dabble in the hobby or people who have the means to attain all of the parallels do not seem to mind. It is the hardcore driver collector who finds it the most irritating, the one who chases all the cards produced even though their funding makes it impossible to do so (this is me). In some ways it is a mini-achievement to say that you have all the parallels-known in our circle as completing the rainbow. In other ways it is extremely annoying chasing the same card with a different color border or lettering 7 different times.



It isn't necessarily the card company's fault. Ask any Press Pass representative and they will gladly explain to you why we have these parallels. Previews on eBay are for charity and are extremely low numbered-which means only the hardcore will chase them. Purples (which started in 2009 for most every release) are to give exclusive cards to case breakers who have been loyal to Press Pass as a reward of sort. Other parallels usually are divided between hobby exclusivity and retail exclusivity in order to force the consumer to want to buy both, therefore selling more product. No one can deny why they do it. It makes perfect business sense plus the consumer thinks they are getting more bang for their buck, which is the goal of busting boxes-getting your money's worth.

There is one problem with this concept though. The market is now flooded with parallels. Previews numbered to five of top level drivers can now be had for less than 20 dollars. Cards once thought extremely rare (ones numbered less than 50) can now be had for less than 5 dollars in most cases. Maybe it is just me but I should not be able to win a parallel numbered to 10 for 3 dollars. It just feels



wrong. That card is supposed to be rare and valuable-and in a way it is-but most collectors chase other things instead (autographs and race used being the most obvious). Why would someone buy a card they already have with a different treatment and a serial number on it when they could buy a unique race used or autograph card where everyone is a bit different?

All I want is for parallels to mean something again. Do not get rid of them-that would ruin the fun of the chase that is trying to get every card (even though it is impossible, it is still a dream). This article was not meant as a statement one way or the other (although it should be clear where I stand). One can form whatever opinion they want on the matter and it won't be wrong. I just know that in the 1990s pulling a parallel or a hard to get insert meant something-and the value of the card showed (just look at the E-X Jambalaya cards for an example). I wonder if those days are behind us. Right now we are stuck in a parallel universe, for better or worse, that is for you to decide.

Who is Trevor Bayne and how did he Stun the Racing World...and eBay



20 year-old Rookie Trevor Bayne, in only his 2nd career start, won Nascar's biggest race, the Daytona 500, in his first attempt, making history and captivating the 30 million people watching at home. A complete surprise to many, most people had never heard of him before the 500. It was a complete shock that he won, but for a select few who were paying attention it might not be as surprising as you would think. The kid from Knoxville, Tennessee was extremely fast in Michael Waltrip's #99 Nationwide car at the beginning of last year when given his opportunity, even scoring 3 consecutive poles and contending for the win at

Iowa before being beaten by Kyle Busch.

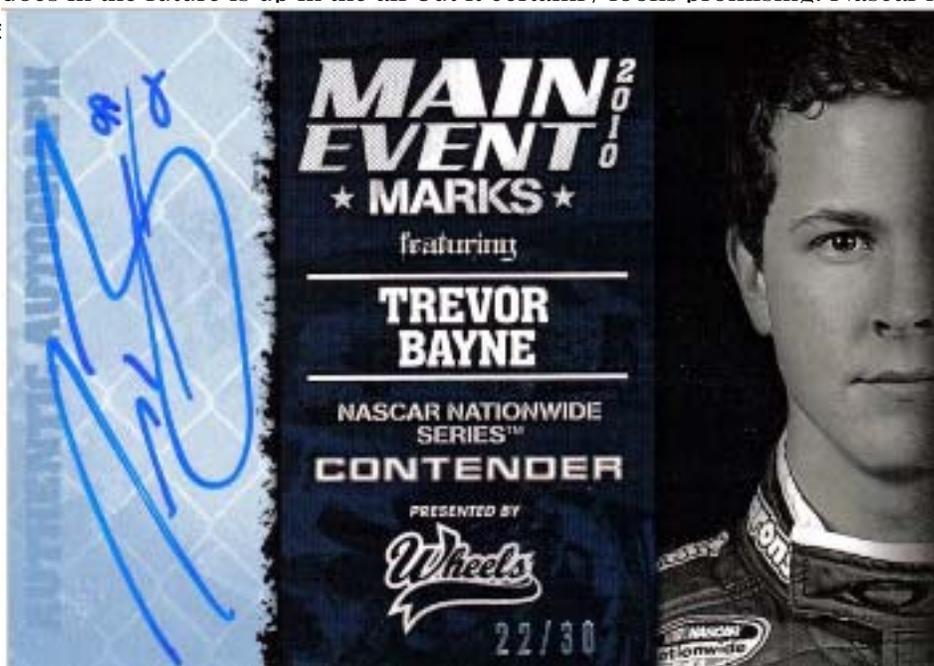
Then something interesting happened-Michael Waltrip Racing got rid of Trevor Bayne in favor of K&N East champion Ryan Truex. For the few who were already fans of the kid and believed in his ability (as I was) we were not happy. The only Nationwide driver outside of Justin Allgaier (who had better equipment) that was competing regularly with the Cup drivers in the Nationwide Series did not have a ride.

Car owner Jack Roush, a guy known to take a chance or two, quickly signed Bayne despite not having sponsorship. Bayne adjusted to his new Nationwide team and performed well in the last part of the year, earning himself a deal with the Wood Brothers #21 Cup team for the Texas event. If one paid close attention to that race Bayne's talent was evident. He finished 17th on the lead lap, took care of the car, and finished 2 spots ahead of Ford's golden boy, Carl Edwards. He had the garage's attention and the few of us who had been paying attention knew he was the real deal. During the off-season, when



someone asked who is the next big thing, the next guy to collect, me and a few others flat told them all-Trevor Bayne-trust us. Ford knew it. Jack Roush knew it. A few of us knew it. Now after his victory in the Daytona 500, the world knows it.

As soon as the world “knew it” Trevor’s cards on eBay exploded in a manner never seen in Nascar circles. His autographs, which usually sold for around 25 dollars (still a fair price and higher than some other top drivers) were now selling for 200 dollars a pop. Base rookie cards were selling for double digits, parallels for more. The last time anything like this even happened was maybe in 2004 when Kasey Kahne was touted as the next Jeff Gordon. So why did so many people become attached to this kid after 1 victory in a race considered by most to be a crapshoot and why the collecting explosion? Here are a few reasons. Bayne is a kid people become attached to. He is the all-American kid. No one dislikes him in fan circles or in garage circles. Every driver after the race was thrilled for the kid-they all like him-all of them-that is rare-almost impossible. He believes in his faith and is not afraid to let the world know what he believes, and as of this point he doesn’t have a bad bone in his body. How can someone dislike a kid who has got his head on so straight that he volunteers on trips to poverty-ridden areas of the world to help orphanages during the off-season? How can someone dislike a kid who said he was going to use all that money he won for winning the Daytona 500 (1.5 million dollars) to help his team run more races and to donate to the charitable causes he believes in, which need the money more than he does. One really has to work to dislike Trevor Bayne. Another thing he has going for him is he is young-at 20 years and 1 day he was the youngest to win the 500 by 5 years. He has all the potential in the world to become great, and no doubt after his Daytona 500 win Ford will be eager to keep him as their next budding superstar-something that brand has been missing since Carl Edwards came along in the mid-2000s. Likable, personable, extremely nice, and extremely talented, Bayne is truly the real deal. How he does in the future is up in the air but it certainly looks promising. Nascar has found their next big name



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2010 SCF Football Season Recap and 2011 Preview

By Craig Hill aka ChillyDoggy

CONTESTS

2010 saw wild NFL & College Football seasons both on the field & in SCF contests. Throughout the season as Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers & Cam Newton and the Auburn Tigers were working towards their respective team championship, SCF members were competing in all sorts of fun contests for SCF football prizes in contests asking all sorts of predictions, from who would be Rookie of the Year in the NFL to all sorts of stats in the Super Bowl and Pro Bowl in the end.

Some of this year's big winners were ToySoldierz, who won the Gridiron Glory Contest for the year and got the first choice out of an unopened box of 2009 Exquisite Football and a sweet Drew Brees "Cool Brees" Inscribed Auto numbered to only 15 which he chose. ToySoldierz also won the NFL Playoff Challenge contest that earned him a Tim Tebow 2010 Absolute Memorabilia RPM GU RC Auto numbered to 10 that had a piece of leather and an oversized piece of jersey.

In another big contest, sponsored by Panini, members won monthly boxes of Panini football cards as well as the grand prize of a football signed by all the rookies at the NFL Rookie Photo Shoot which was won by member, polamalu43favre04.

Other prizes awarded in SCF related football contests this year included a Sam Bradford 2010 Press Pass SE RC Auto, Nate Davis 2009 Topps Finest Rebook Patch Auto 1/1, Charlie Joiner 2001 Topps Reprint Auto, Arrelious Benn 2010 Absolute Memorabilia War Room Oversized 3-Color Patch GU/5, Rob Gronkowski 2010 Absolute Memorabilia War Room GU Auto/25, a box of 2010 Press Pass Football, Kevin Smith 2009 SP Authentic RC Auto/999, Ted Hendricks 2009 Contenders Legendary Contenders Auto & a Silver Earl Thomas 2010 Press Pass RC Auto/199. of these prizes were from SCF sponsored breaks provided by the various card manufacturers.

Also, 2011 contests are already under way with a currently running contest that asks members to predict which college players will impress with their physical abilities at the NFL Combine. There will be a full slate of contests again this year... if and when there is a next year in the NFL.

FOOTBALL PRODUCTS

The last few NFL Football Products are starting to come out and an impressive newcomer is Topps Five Star. It's a pricey product at around \$500 per box, but each box contains 4 on card autos, 1 jersey & 3 base, all that are at least 160 pt. cards and an obvious attempt to replace Upper Deck's Exquisite. I personally have run two group breaks on the forum and seen four triple or quad patch booklet autos #'d to 20 or less come from them including Ndamukong Suh, Matt Stafford, Ronnie Lott & Jerome Bettis. A Tim Tebow Oversized 3-Color Patch 1/1 also came from this product.



Contenders has also come out recently, and rchurchward ran a group break of this product on the forums. Lots of hype on this product, as usual, and people searching for those SPs by rushing to check eBay to see how many are listed and how many are sold before making their pick. I don't know how many conversations I've had about that in the last 3 weeks.

Another nice new product this year is Topps Tribute. Before I saw this product in person, I must have read at least 5 times in people's breaks that it's better in person so when I finally bought a pack, it surely was. It features a sort of, mirror finish, and is a very bright card with several colored parallel levels. Very nice, but again, expensive product at around \$50 per pack.

Still to come out is year is SP Authentic which will feature only college uniform cards which college football fans love but many NFL fans aren't as excited about. The Tim Tebow & Sam Bradford cards from this set are sure to be some of the most sought after by the Florida Gator & Oklahoma Sooner fans out there though.

National Treasures is scheduled to ship anytime and I also one of the most popular product of every year and is another of the years most expensive but nicest products at around \$440 per box. Several 2011 products are already ready for pre-orders too including a new one... Leaf Metal that will feature 4 cards per pack, one pack per box. All 4 will be autos. Others include the usual in Press Pass, Sage & Prestige. Upper Deck football seems to be releasing early this year and I suspect they are just dropping the "Draft" from their Upper Deck Draft product from the last two years.

The SCF Football Team Enjoyed 2010 and is looking forward to 2011. In the meantime though, stick around the football forums because even if there is no action on the gridiron, it doesn't mean that there isn't any on SCF! Drop by to chat about your favorite sport or make some deals to complete those sets you couldn't nail during the regular season!



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On the Ice

By **Richard McAdam aka RGM81**

February has been an incredibly exciting month in the Hockey Forums on Sports Card Forum!

We are very happy to announce two major staff promotions! 30ranfordfan (Sean) has been promoted to the Hockey Team Manager, while reoddai (Matthew) has been elevated to the role of Assistant Team Manager. The team is always happy to hear your questions and concerns!

“Contest” has been the most commonly-seen word around the hockey boards, as SCF has run no fewer than 5 huge contests in the past month:

1. Upper Deck sponsored an All Star Game redemption giveaway
2. Panini sponsored an All Star Game redemption giveaway
3. The Heritage Classic prop sheet trivia contest
4. Panini’s monthly March to the Playoffs “Pick the Winners” contest
5. And the biggest one of all...we gave one lucky member and their guest the opportunity to meet Carey Price and other members of the Montreal Canadiens at a charity auction & autograph signing held in Montreal on February 25th. Check out habsmtl09’s Show & Tell thread here: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1335072> Thank you to StarSide Signatures for sponsoring this awesome contest!

Our members are what make SCF a truly great site, and it is our pleasure to reward you for your loyalty with these fantastic contests. Be on the lookout for more great giveaways in the future!

There has been a bit of a lull in the product release schedule. While January featured a large number of releases, delays have limited collectors to only one major new release in the month of February. Fortunately that release was the highly-popular Upper Deck Series Two, and the boards have been loaded with many spectacular breaks. The early weeks of March should see business pick up, as Panini Crown Royale will finally be released, along with Pinnacle, Playoff Contenders (and its 14K Golden Tickets!), SP Authentic, and ITG Decades.

While not considered a major product release, Upper Deck’s National Hockey Card Day was held on February 12th. Now in its third year, the program gives away free packs of Upper Deck cards to anybody who stops by their local card shop. To add some extra punch, UD had a special commemorative Jonathan Toews card made for anyone who made a purchase of an Upper Deck product. And of course there were the pack-inserted autographs of Taylor Hall, Bobby Orr, and Sidney Crosby. It was a fantastic success across Canada, and a couple lucky SCF members even won special prizes given away direct from Upper Deck! The NHL Trade Deadline just passed on February 28th. While some teams looked to make minor adjustments for a playoffs run, many look drastically different today than they did before the trading frenzy. Ottawa and St. Louis made a number of move involving key personnel, and after years of rumours Toronto finally traded away all-star defenceman Tomas Kaberle. As we come into the home stretch of the NHL’s regular season, we will see if these changes help put teams over the top!

Thanks to everybody that has made this season so exciting at SCF for all of our hockey card collectors!

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Basketball Happenings

By Nathan Loewy aka Garnett_21, Jay Weger aka Jay520 and John Broman aka XxVISIONxX

Card and Hobby Talk

Hey Basketballolics Its time for our monthly article for SCF, In this topic we will talk a little about the Hobby and Some Hot cards On the Market...!

Hobby Talk: As we have all heard, Shortly after all-star weekend Carmelo Anthony Makes his Move to New York, To most it was a shock and to other it was probably the Best for him Now that he can play with Amare Stoudemire...Lets see how that works out. Also another not so blockbuster move is Boston Celtics Dealing Kendrick Perkins to the Thunder, I know Boston Fans cant be happy about that. Although some say it's a Good thing, well let's see how it goes. So Stay tuned for more Updates in next months edition of SportsCardForums Article.

Hot Cards: Well this year its no surprise that Blake Griffin is the Rookie to go after.. His National Treasures Auto/Patch seems to be the Rage of the Hobby when it comes to Auto/Patches. Also his Topps Chrome#/999 Rookie is Selling pretty hot right now and comes in at card #2 on the hot list, So to all you Blake Fans get them Now don't wait.

Contests and Winners

This month the NBA Top Performers leaders through 2/27 are jdlee123 with 23 points and second are Jesrey and Thrillseeker tied with 22 points. JesRey came in first place in January with 25 points winning 100 cc and jdlee123 took second place with 22 points winning 50 cc. The NBA Guess the Score leaders through 2/27 for VIP's is JesRey with 14 wins, andrewhoya 12 wins, and TheHeel with 11. JesRey also leads with 14 wins for regular members, then 2FarGone 8 wins and dwighthoward and scooby10672 tied at 7. On the NCAA guess the Score side bouncer, gladdyontherise, and TheHeel have 3 wins each to lead the VIP's. abah58 has 3 wins and leads the regular members. Theme Weeks will return this month so be prepared to show off your best in March! Also in March there will be a contest for you March Madness fans with the return of the bracket contest. The "Ultimate" 2011 NBA All-Star contest was a success with a lot of entries. Check this link to see the winners: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1310564>.

Super Collector

This month there was only 1 Super Collector addition and it was a good one. Xavieronly1 has made Super Collector status with an awesome Anfernee "Penny" Hardaway player collection. xavieronly1 (real name Chun) was introduced into the hobby by his uncle in Hong Kong in 1997. He then moved to the US in '98 and liked MJ but realized he could get 2 Hardaway's for a Jordan and chose to collect Penny. Chun stopped collecting in '01 because of school and lack of interest. He started collecting again in 09 after seeing a pair of Penny Hardaway shoes he wanted as a kid and now had

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the salary to support his collection. His Top 10 List is interesting with only 4 autos and 2 jersey cards. Top 5 are 97-98 E-X2001 Jambalaya #2, 4. 98-99 UD Game Jersey #GJ23, 3. 96-97 SP SPx Force #F5b, 2. 97-98 UD Game Jersey home and away, 1. 1996 SPx Auto #NNO. There is a nice story on how he acquired this card. Back in '98 he had pulled a Vince Carter Chrome rc that had a bv of \$80 back then. He saw the Hardaway SPx auto at a card show and asked the dealer if he would trade it for the VC rc. The dealer said yes to the trade. Chun was so excited that he ran (yes ran, no car) home from the show to get it and back to make the trade. It took him an hour and a half total running time to get back to the dealer. Talk about dedication to making a trade!

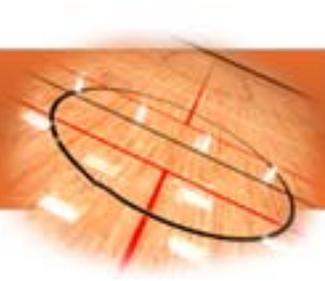
Pack/Box Breaks

There were some nice cards pulled this month from the packs/box breaks forum. 10-11 Donruss was the big product again with rack packs and blasters yielding some good hits. First off was ShtHairMcGee who pulled a John Wall RC , Evan Turner rc and best card was a Patrick Ewing Masters parallel 25/25 from a blaster. Jonathan627 got a box and hit a Richard Hamilton Jersey Kings patch/auto 5/10. jkidd2 pulled some nice cards from 4 blasters with the best cards being a T.J. Ford auto /49, Magic Johnson gu /299, and Deron Williams Ruby die-cut Magicians 8/25(Williams jersey #). The best Donruss box break came from Zeppelin1985 who pulled a Toni Kukoc 3 clr patch/auto numbered 23/25!

10-11 Panini Threads and 10-11 Playoff Contenders had some great pulls as well with Filthy pulling a Demarcus Cousins rc auto and gu /399. #15Vince Carter broke 2 boxes of Threads and got a Evan Tuner rc auto and gu/399 and best card Stephen Curry 3 clr patch /50. He also broke a box of 10-11 Prestige getting a Steve Nash patch /50 and box of 10-11 Limited hitting Ed Davis RC jersy/auto. XxViSiOnxX pulled Patrick Ewing gu and a nice Bill Walton auto from Threads. harkey1345 hit a nice John Wall rc auto redemption from 2 boxes of Contenders. Mavsfan pulled a nice Jason Kidd auto /49 from Contenders as well. ericmccoy75 got a nice john Wall/Evan Tuner dual auto from 10-11 R&S. McPUG did well with Threads pulling a Derrick Rose patch /50 while aandbconst hit a Steve Nash patch/auto /21 from Limited. ksched pulled a Gerald Wallace tag #1/2 from Timeless Treasures tin.

In 08-09 Topps and Topps Chrome there were some big hits. Starting with Sac Kings pulling a Russell Westbrook Gold rc /50 and a sweet Derrick Rose/Michael Beasley dual auto from 9 packs of Topps. pietroskim did extremely well by pulling a Michael Beasley McDonald's All-American auto and better yet a Michael Beasley 14 k Gold Rookie Medallion numbered 1/15! tjthomps89 pulled a unbelievable Kevin Durant/Carmelo Anthony dual jersey/auto 5/5 from a box of 08-09 SPx on his birthday! Talk about a nice gift! McPUG hit a Durant rc refractor /299 from 07-08 Bowman and XxViSiOnxX managed to find a Durant rc from 2 boxes of 07-08 Finest.

There were 2 big Blake Griffin hits this month one from carmenscardcloset who pulled his auto from 09-10 Crown Royal. The best break by far was from blitzburg26 who pulled opened a box of 09-10 National Treasures pulling a Brandon Jennings gu /25, Tyreke Evans dual gu /25 and triple gu/auto /30, and Chase Budinger Logoman 5/5. Any one would be happy with that but he wasn't done yet. He hit



the Blake Griffin rc patch/auto numbered to 25!!!

NBA News

Over the past month, the NBA has seen a flurry of news-worthy stories, led by the trading deadline and the all-star game. The all-star game was quite the success, yet again, with it held in Los Angeles, home to three of the all-stars in Blake Griffin, Pau Gasol and Kobe Bryant. The events started on Friday night with the much anticipated Rookie Challenge, which certainly didn't disappoint. The rookie squad took the game by a final of 148-140. Blake Griffin did not play as well as most thought, playing only 14 minutes and scoring just 14 points. DeMarcus Cousins starred with 33 points on 15/24 shooting, and he pulled down 14 rebounds, but the show was stolen by John Wall, who scored just 12 points, but dished out a record 22 assists. DeJuan Blair starred for the sophmores, scoring 28 points and pulling down 15 rebounds. Fourteen players scored in double figures for this game, and every player scored at least 6 points.

On Saturday, the non-game events took place, with Team Atlanta winning the Shooting Stars competition, posting a 1:10 time in the final round to beat Team Texas. The Skills Challenge, which featured defending-champion Chris Paul as the only guaranteed player to participate, leaving the rest of the selections up to a fan voting. Chris Paul did quite badly, recording the worst time in the first round, making for an early exit. Stephen Curry and Russell Westbrook made it to the finals with Curry pulling out the victory by posting a final round time of 28.2 seconds. Next was the Three-Point Shootout which featured Ray Allen, who recently broke the all-time record of most three-pointers made in a career. While Ray made it to the finals, James Jones of the Heat stole the show by scoring 20 of a possible 30 points in the final round to defeat both Allen and teammate Paul Pierce. Finally, the Dunk Contest, featuring rookie sensation Blake Griffin, was up. There were two "perfect" dunks made, neither of which by Griffin! Javale McGee of the Wizards scored a perfect 50 on his first dunk, while DeMar DeRozan of the Raptors scored a perfect 50 on his second dunk. Griffin won this contest by receiving 68% of the fan votes by dunking over the hood of a full-size automobile.

Finally, the all-star game was played on Sunday, with the West defeating the East by a final of 148-143. LeBron James starred by recording only the second triple-double in all-star game history, scoring 29 points, pulling down 12 rebounds, and dishing out 10 assists, but it wasn't enough to win the game or the MVP. Kobe Bryant won the MVP award by scoring 37 points and pulling down 14 rebounds, including 10 offensive rebounds. All in all, the events of the 2011 All-Star Weekend were quite successful, and very entertaining!

Following the all-star events ending, focus shifted to the trading deadline. The Nuggets promptly worked out a deal to trade Carmelo Anthony to the Knicks. The Nuggets also sent Chauncey Billups and three other players to New York for Raymond Felton, Danilo Gallinari, Wilson Chandler, Timofey Mosgov, and draft picks. Also in on this deal were the Timberwolves who sent Corey Brewer to New York and

Kosta Koufos to Denver in exchange for Anthony Randolph and Eddy Curry. This trade was the first snowflake of what turned into an avalanche of trades that followed. A summary of trades made are as follows:

Deron Williams was traded from the Jazz to the Nets for Devin Harris, Derrick Favors and two first-round draft picks.

Gerald Wallace was traded from the Bobcats to the Trail Blazers for three players and two first-round draft picks.

Aaron Brooks was sent to the Suns, while the Rockets received Goran Dragic and a future first-round pick.

In three separate trades, the Celtics traded Kendrick Perkins and Nate Robinson to the Thunder for Jeff Green, Nenad Krstic and a first-round pick. They followed that by sending rookies Semih Erden and Luke Harangody to the Cavaliers for a future second-round pick. Finally, they sent Marquis Daniels to the Kings for a 2017 (yes, 2017) protected second-round draft pick.

Nazr Mohammed was traded from the Bobcats to the Thunder in exchange for DJ White and Morris Peterson.

Houston sent Shane Battier and Ish Smith to Memphis for Hasheem Thabeet and a future first-round pick.

Baron Davis was traded from the Clippers to the Cavaliers, along with a first-round draft pick, in exchange for Mo Williams and Jamario Moon.

Mike Bibby, Jordan Crawford, Maurice Evans, and a first-round draft pick were traded from Atlanta to Washington for Kirk Hinrich and Hilton Armstrong.

Troy Murphy and a future second-round pick went from New Jersey to Golden State for Brandan Wright and Dan Gadzuric

New Orleans acquired Carl Landry and sent Marcus Thornton to the Kings.

James Johnson was sent to Toronto, while Chicago received a first-round draft pick.

Now it's time to see how all of these deals help or harm the playoff contenders. Only time will tell how good or bad of a deal these teams made!



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Keep an Eye on these Guys!
By Brad Wingate aka BBonds25

It's February. It's the shortest month of the year, and where I live, sometimes the coldest. It's also the month of love, with Valentine's Day falling right in the middle. But this year's Valentine's Day was extra special, as it marked the first day of Spring Training. Pitchers and catchers reporting to camp is a day I had been waiting for since the Giants won the World Series last October. In fact, I was so excited, that I drafted 2 fantasy baseball teams within 3 days of the Yahoo season opening. That last move made my wife question my sanity. I had to explain to her my undying love for the game.

So with Spring Training here, it's time to take a look into the upcoming season, and see who I believe will be some of the players to watch for, both on the diamond, and in the hobby.



Ryan Braun-OF, Milwaukee Brewers

Braun has been one of the best players in the National League since his rookie year in 2007. More so than his power hitting teammate Prince Fielder, Braun is the catalyst of the Brewers offense. He can hit for power and average, can steal a base, and plays a respectable outfield. With the ongoing uncertainty in St. Louis, the Brewers are a favorite to win the NL Central. As Braun enters his playing prime, this could be the year that he takes home the NL MVP award.

Braun's rookie cards have always been sought after since he first appeared in 2005. He does have 2 autographed rookies, Bowman Chrome Draft, and Bowman Sterling. For the autographed RC collector, the Sterling is much more affordable. But, if you are a budget conscious collector, his 2005 Topps Chrome Update and Highlights is the card to own. It is still vary affordable, but with the huge following behind Chrome, this card has the potential to double in value with an MVP type season.

Matthew Kemp-OF, Los Angeles Dodgers

To say that Kemp's 2010 season was a disappointment would be a bit of an understatement. Though the Dodgers' organization is in a bit of disarray, the LA fan base is always expecting at least an NL West title, if not a World Series win. Kemp is the man that should make this offense go. He has 30-30 talent, and could easily push it to 40-40. In fact, he has stated that he expects to reach that 40-40 plateau this season. If he can get back to, if not improve upon, his 2009 form (26 HR, 101 RBI, .297 AVG, 34 SB), the Dodgers could make a run at unseating the Giants in the NL.

Kemp's rookie cards also hail from the 2005 season, and like Braun, he also has an autographed RC



(2005 Bowman Chrome), as well as a non-autographed rookie in Topps Chrome Update & Highlights. But, he also has 2 less heralded rookies in Bowmans Best, and Topps Total. I think the Bowmans Best would be a better buy, especially with the condition sensitivity of the set. But, Topps Total always seems to be a set that is overlooked by most collectors. No matter which one you choose, make sure you choose at least 1.

Evan Longoria-3B, Tampa Bay Rays

Longoria has been a stud since he stepped on the diamond in 2008, and was part of the reason that the Rays went to the World Series that year. But, he also had some pretty good players around him to help. Gone are former team leader Carl Crawford and power hitting first baseman Carlos Pena, and no one knows if BJ Upton will return to his old self. Longo will now be looked upon as the leader of a Tampa team that will field a mix of grizzled vets (Johnny Damon, Manny Ramirez), and youngsters (Desmond Jennings, John Jaso). Longoria will have a large responsibility as he tries to bring his team back to the top of a tough AL East. But, if anyone can pick up a team that seems to be on its way down, it's this man.

Longoria has a laundry list of autographed RC's and pre-RC prospect cards. But, he also has several non-autographed rookies, including both 2008 Bowman Chrome and Topps Chrome. But, if you want to have a little fun, look no further than 2008 Upper Deck Timeline. This set boasts 7 different cards of the Tampa third baseman, though only 3 of them hold the RC designation. These cards are very affordable, and make for a fun, but attainable hunt. In my opinion, most of Longoria's RCs are undervalued, so get them now, and then trade them to me.

Kevin Youkilis-3B/1B, Boston Red Sox

This guy is the heart and soul of a revamped BoSox squad, yet he seems to always be overshadowed by teammates. Players such as Manny Ramirez, David Ortiz, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Jacoby Ellsbury, and now Carl Crawford and Adrian Gonzalez have taken the limelight from this gritty gamer. But he still goes out there day in and day out and gives it his all. He plays the game the way it should be played. The Sox had some hope of making the playoffs last season, but a season ending injury to Youkilis all but killed those hopes. This year, the American League looks like it belongs to the Red Sox, but they will need their leader to help bring them back to post season glory.

Because Youk has never really garnered a lot of fanfare, his cards are not really sought after outside of team collectors. He has autographed RCs in 2003 Bowman Chrome and Bowmans Best, both of which are very affordable. He also has a Topps Chrome RC, as well as a card in the Bowman Chrome Draft Set. But if you want an RC that is not as heavily chased, look for his 2003 Donruss Elite Extra Edition. With a print run of 900, it is his only numbered RC.

I hope you have enjoyed my look ahead into the upcoming baseball season. I can't wait for the actual season to begin on March 31. But for now, I'm happy just talking about the players of the game, and there cards.



5 Ways to Avoid the SCF Disputes Process

By Kevin O'Connor aka rainman67ko

My name is Kevin and I am an advisor or moderator on the SCF Disputes Team. I will be writing articles related to the Disputes process, best practices, and online trading execution which is the follow through after the trade is completed. Please contact me with any questions regarding the SCF Disputes process or trading execution and I will try to answer immediately, and incorporate ideas into future articles published here in Sports Card Forum magazine.

The Dispute resolution process on SCF is in place to help traders resolve trade issues through impartial mediation with the assistance of an SCF Moderator.

Here are 5 ways to avoid being called into a dispute:

1. Be Prompt - Be sure to ship within 3 days of the trade in accordance with SCF Rules. If you are not able to ship within the specified time period you should communicate this to your trading partner prior to confirming the trade. Late senders are often found on the receiving end of a dispute filed against them.

2. Pack Well - Package your trades as if you are receiving them. You want to have them reach their destination in exactly the same condition you shipped them. Single cards should be in a soft sleeve and appropriate sized top loader. I prefer to use a team bag to keep the card from working its way out of the top loader. Many traders use tape to accomplish this, however, be sure the sticky side of the tape cannot contact the card. Multiple cards should be protected in the same way, and may be secured inside a larger top loader, but not over packed. No one wants a creased card caused by the sender. Some traders ship cards secured between 2 top loaders wrapped in bubble wrap and secured by tape. Parts of used bubble mailers work well for this practice. Always ship in a bubble mailer, secured, and the TO: and FROM: addresses clearly marked. PWE's (plain white envelopes) are not recommended and should only be used if both parties agree and list PWE in the trade manager.

3. Know Your Condition – Do not send a damaged card, or off condition card, without clearly communicating its condition with your trade partner. Scans alone do not tell the whole story so it is up to you to be forthcoming about any defects or the cards overall grade. This is particularly important with higher end items. Everyone likes a deal but no one wants a card that looks like it has been dealt. Remember flipping cards as a kid? Dinged corners, creases, cracks, etc.; all constitute less than NrMT/MT (near mint/mint) condition and should be disclosed during the negotiations. Misrepresentation of condition is dishonest. Resources are available to help you learn to judge card condition.

4. Keep a Record – Enter the date you ship into the trade manager. Retain your postal receipt and DC# (Delivery Confirmation Number). This is of particular importance where high end trades are involved. Proof of shipping, and tracking with delivery confirmation, can be very helpful in proving you shipped your end. Traders may want to consider insurance for items of high value during negotiations. Many people would gladly pay the extra few dollars for a chance to have their lost packages tracked or reimbursed.

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5. Talk to Me! – Communication (there’s that word again) is imperative. The importance of a courtesy message, indicating any issues, or a prompt reply to a PM, goes a long way.

These are but a few “Best Practices” for online trading. Following these basic guidelines will help avoid the disputes process.





The Most Wonderful Time of the Year **By Mike Greene aka indyreds**

The time has come again! It is baseball spring training! This is prime time for through the mail autograph collectors. We have started up the new 2011 Baseball Spring Training Success thread. On the first page of the thread you can find a link to last year's thread and see who signed the previous season. It may help you select a few requests to mail.

Some early returns have been coming back for members. Vladimir Guerrero was the biggest shocker of the early signers. It is unusual to see a player of that level to return requests as quickly as he has this February. I know that last season both the NL MVP Joey Votto and the AL MVP Josh Hamilton returned my requests with autographed cards, but they sent back my items after the regular season was over.

The more traditional targets of young players and prospects have started paying dividends. Matt Wieters, Drew Pomeranz, Carlos Santana and Dustin Ackley can be counted as some of the young players who have put smiles on the faces of members of our autograph community with fresh signatures reaching mailboxes before the start of March.

I have always been a fan of sending to coaches and managers who used to be players. Some of yesterday's greats who have been signing via their current teams include Bud Black, Ned Yost and Mookie Wilson. You can always write to the players who seem to give consistently to members of the hobby like Pat Neshek, but this is the time to take a little risk with your requests as well. One of the reasons to check the success threads and the recent success tab in the TTM Database is to find out what players rewarded the hounds who took a shot in the dark at non-traditional signers.

In the past few seasons Tony Perez, David Price, Paul Molitor, Mariano Rivera, Robin Yount, Wil Clark and many other tough to get players have rewarded those who tried them in spring training. I must admit that this is a fun time of the year to check my mail!

Drop on over to the TTM forums and celebrate your returns with other members of our community. Please also take time to enjoy the fun with all the autograph related threads. Should you possibly not be a baseball fan you will still find plenty of threads and returns related to all the other sports and their signers. Anyone who is new to that area of the forums I challenge you to find better looking cards than you find in our customs area. I have always been amazed by those who are creative enough to make their own designs, cards, get them signed and make them look better than what I pull from a pack. Best of luck on your returns and PLAY BALL!



Social Media and The Hobby: A Work in Progress
by Richard McAdam aka RGM81

In the 21st century, the main means any company has to connect to its customers is via the Internet. The World Wide Web brings information and insights to people in real time, allowing people and companies to connect instantaneously to share and distribute their experiences. When the title for Star Wars Episode III was revealed, it was done online at the Star Wars official website. If a celebrity has something to say to the world (in 140 characters or less), they take to their Twitter account. When a US presidential aspirant wants to spread the message, they update their Facebook. In all areas of life, the Internet and social networking are at the forefront of interconnectivity between company and consumer.

It is encouraging, then, to see the rising importance of the Internet and social networking in the sports card industry. For the purposes of this discussion I will only look at the hockey card manufacturers and their websites and social network sites. While all three of In The Game, Panini, and Upper Deck have official presences online and on Facebook, they have yet to truly master the art of social networking. Each has their strong points, each shines in certain areas, yet each of the manufacturers also have weaknesses and highly undeveloped methods of connecting with their fan bases, i.e. us, the collectors. I will take a look at each of the company's websites and social networking areas, giving them grades for each as well as some recommendations for improvement.

Panini



The new guys in hockey have done a good job winning over hearts and minds with their products, and they have also strived to connect with customers online. Panini has an official website, a Facebook account, a Twitter account, an official blog site, and has senior staff members participating on sports card trading sites such as Sports

Card Forum.

The Official Website: <http://www.paniniamerica.net>

When you visit Panini's website you are met with a nice and organized main page that features bright colours and a banner image spotlighting some of their recent releases. The different sections of the site are neatly organized on a header tab, directing you to the latest releases, checklists, a member account page, news, and other relevant information. This is good. However, the releases page has not been updated since Certified so there is no official product information for the last several products released by Panini. Accessing checklists can be tedious, having to go through a number of steps to reach the endgame, which is ultimately an Excel spreadsheet. The lists there are organized, making searches for particular players very easy to do. Entering redemptions on the site is a simple process. All of this said, most of the best information coming from Panini originates from their blog, which is linked on the main page but not in the most visible way.

Grade: B

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The Official Blog: The Knight's Lance – <http://paniniamerica.wordpress.com>

If you want all the latest news, product previews, and behind-the-scenes information from Panini, The Knight's Lance is your destination. The blog is updated almost daily, and the information is relevant to collectors, who get to see players signing cards, "Panini Peek" previews of upcoming releases, and even product review box breaks starring Tracy Hackler. Panini reps are also interactive on the blog's comments, and will often respond to questions and concerns made by fans. Did I mention contests? They have lots of contests announced on the blog, and they draw considerable interest from collectors. Panini has done a top-notch job with The Knight's Lance.

Grade: A+

Facebook

Panini's Facebook page is a good location for collectors to get the latest news and updates on product releases, share their breaks, and ask questions. While many of Panini's postings on their Facebook page are simply links to their blog page, there is also some valuable information posted. The Info tab gives a pretty detailed history of the company, while the wall has the usual assortment of questions from collectors. They could do more with the page, for sure, but it is a good resource of information and access to the company.

Grade: B-

In The Game



In The Game has remained a viable participant in the hockey card market despite operating without a license for the past five years. Through their willingness to listen to collectors, excellent products, and top-notch memorabilia, they are a real force and have assured themselves a place in the hobby. ITG maintains an official website, an official blog site, and a Facebook account, and the owner of the company is heavily involved on online trading sites.

The Official Website: www.itgtradingcards.com

The ITG site is very simple, yet to the point, in terms of its layout. Underneath a scrolling banner spotlighting some of the spectacular memorabilia cards in its upcoming releases, there are a series of links to the company's products, including a complete catalogue of all releases dating back to the 1998-99 season. Each of these releases has a full checklist (often posted well in advance of the actual release!) and a plethora of information about the product. Outside of that, the site is a little lean. The News page has not been updated since March 2010 and the online store has not been updated to include pre-orders for any 2010-11 products. Still, for the meat and potatoes portion of what collectors want



product information and checklists—the site delivers.

Grade: A-

The Official Blog: According to Dr. Price – <http://prezsez.wordpress.com/>

When Dr. Price launched his blog he posted almost daily with his insights on the hobby and gave collectors some previews of upcoming releases. Then he went on vacation for two weeks and has only recently regained his form. After a lull from October to December, he returned to blogging in January giving sneak peeks for upcoming ITG products, but then took pretty much all of February off. There isn't a ton of new information if you're not on the e-mail update list, but it is still a good, if underutilized, resource for collectors.

Grade: C+

Upper Deck



Even though it now shares the hockey landscape, Upper Deck still maintains its place at the centre of the hobby. Their releases feature the most well-known and –loved rookies cards that collectors still clamour for every year. As you would expect of a long-standing successful business, Upper Deck is very much immersed in the technologies brought forward by the Internet. They have an official website, an official blog site, a Facebook account, a Twitter account, and some participation on hobby message boards.

The Official Website: www.upperdeck.com

Upper Deck's official website has a very slick and professional design, inviting collectors to check out their Authenticated memorabilia, check out the latest news releases, and of course the product information pages. When you get to the actual hockey homepage, however, you see a rookie spotlight on Tyler Myers that has been there since February 2010, a rookie photoshoot session video for the 2009-10 rookie class, and a product promo for 2009-10 Upper Deck Series 2. The annoying clicking sound generated by hovering your mouse over the new product tabs will have you reaching for the mute button pretty quickly, too. Once you reach the product information page you see the set checklist (often not until after the product has been released)...and not a lot else. There was a time that UD posted images along with their checklists but that appears to be a thing of the past. The set breakdowns are accurate and easy to access, but the "Print Checklist" function will yield an average of a 30-page print job. The bare-bones approach and lack of official information leaves much to be desired.

Grade: C

The Official Blog: Upper Deck Blog – <http://upperdeckblog.com>

Unlike the website, the official UD blog is updated regularly and brings collectors a wide range of interesting stories. In January alone, there was a story about Tyler Seguin at the rookie photoshoot, and many tales about contest winners attending the Winter Classic. February continued that effort level,



spotlighting two major contests (including one that featured the author) and other great information. The blogs are usually posted by Chris Carlin, UD's Social Marketing and Social Media Manager, and it is really cool to have that kind of insight into the hobby and what takes place at Upper Deck. It is often a very fun read at the UD Blog, not least their spotlight on SCF's very own Karine Hains, who was honoured as the Collector of the Month for June 2010.

Grade: A-

Facebook

Upper Deck has made Facebook its primary resource for distribution of information and product previews. Galleries spotlighting cards from upcoming releases are added regularly, giving their "fans" the inside scoop on all the latest news. There are also contests being run regularly, which is always a great way to connect with new people. The Discussions tab is a wealth of information. Most questions are met with a response in a very reasonable amount of time (some take longer due to the research needed) and are very helpful. I recently made an inquiry about a couple of outstanding redemptions for a player I collect, and UD was able to give me the information that the cards were never produced. While disappointed to hear that, I appreciated the fact that they told me the answer and took me off the hook from having to chase down two very low-numbered cards. Overall, the UD Facebook page is the model that all of the other manufacturers should follow: interactive, contests, information, and lots of pictures.

Grade: A+

Since I do not use Twitter I cannot really comment on how useful that is as a networking tool for the card companies. The blog sites will often have a Twitter feed on their sidebars which often appears to be just a link to the news stories on the blogs and/or other official networking venues. I will leave it to the commentariat to discuss how useful those tools are in bringing them the latest information.

Overall, each company does things well that deserves to be commended. In addition to their own official works, both Panini and ITG are active at SCF, fielding questions about their products, providing product release information, and generally involving themselves in the SCF community. For this participation we are grateful, as it does enhance the site that much more to have an official manufacturers presence. It is not an easy challenge to engage in the new technologies and keep collectors as informed as they would like to be. The information era seemingly requires an endless supply of new information to be provided to the masses, yet this is not a practical way for the card companies to devote all their time and resources. There are still some trade secrets to maintain, which is not easy in the face of demands to have the curtain pulled back to increase transparency.

With so much of the hobby becoming concentrated in online efforts, the card companies are doing a very good job in embracing social networking. While more updates to the official sites would benefit collectors, for the most part they all do a great job of reaching out and connecting with collectors to bring them the latest news and information, which makes the hobby more enjoyable for all involved. When we see something that appears out of the ordinary, and can directly approach an Al Muir, a Brian Price, or a Chris Carlin with our questions and have them answered within hours, everybody wins.

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NHL: It's time for the 5 point game
By Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan

Over the last few weeks, one of the biggest stories has been how tight the playoff races are shaping up to be. In the Western conference in particular, there was a few days in early February where only 3 points separated 3rd place from 11th.

We're reminded daily about how 'close' and 'exciting' the playoff races are. Sportscasters insist that if a team can just come in 8th place, they have a real chance to win the Stanley Cup – because in today's NHL, a league of parity, everyone is so close, and so evenly matched.

What they should be telling you: it's all a farce. The bogus way the NHL compiles regular season stats is designed to prevent teams from pulling away from the pack. It's designed to keep mediocre teams in the hunt for a division title, and it makes sure that all but the most inept teams are in the playoff races until the middle of March.

I suppose at some level, the NHL should actually be commended. They've achieved what other North American sports leagues haven't been able to do. They've tricked fans into thinking their team might actually win this year (when in fact it'd be pretty easy to narrow the Champion down to 5 or 6 teams right now, and you'd likely get it right. Hint: for the most part it's the same 5 or 6 teams you would have picked a month ago, and it's probably the same 5 or 6 you would have picked back in September).

The notion of "Finish 8th place, and you have a chance to win the Cup" needs several ****s placed beside it. The two examples that are cited by the media over, and over, and over again are the 2006 Edmonton Oilers and the 2010 Philadelphia Flyers.

I say hogwash. What the 2006 Edmonton Oilers proved is that deadline deals can work. If you take a mediocre team, rebuild a third of the defence (Tarnstrom & Spacek), add secondary scoring that you lack (Samsonov) and fix your goaltending problems (Roloson), you can suddenly become an elite team.

The 2010 Philadelphia Flyers proved that the pre-Season prognosticators were correct, and that just because your team underachieves for three quarters of the season, it doesn't mean you've thrown away your chances.

Along with the 2007 Anaheim Ducks, it also proves that any team with Chris Pronger really is a contender.

The NHL needs to correct the way it scores its games. Enough with this phantom point. The idea that some games are worth 3 points, and others only worth 2 is ridiculous. Every game should be worth an equal number of points. It's the only way to give the standings a true reflection of how good (or bad) teams are.

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(Before I go any farther, I'll be the first to say I have no problem returning to the days of ties. I would have no issue with changing the current system to simply reward teams with 2 points for a win, and nothing for a loss, regardless of the 'type' of loss. I've just come to accept that we're never bringing back ties, and we're always going to have pity points. We just need to lessen their effect on the standings.)

There has been suggestions in the past, that we should make all games worth three points. Give a regulation winner 3 points, and a winner in OT or a Shoot Out 2. I don't think it goes far enough. We need 5 point games.

How does a 5 point game work? Easy:

- Regulation Win 5 Points
- Overtime Win 4 Points
- Shootout Win 3 Points
- Shootout Loss 2 Points
- Overtime Loss 1 Point
- Regular Loss Nothing

What would this change? Well, who makes the playoffs is the biggest thing, along with 'how tight' the races are.

Team	REGW	REGL	OTW	OTL	SHW	SHL	Pts	3-PT Rank
1 Washington	42	23	6	7	5	6	123	270
2 New Jersey	40	27	7	2	6	5	101	238
3 Pittsburgh	33	28	6	5	9	2	93	222
4 Buffalo	35	27	6	4	4	6	100	237
5 Ottawa	34	32	5	3	5	5	94	233
6 Boston	25	36	6	8	10	9	93	193
7 Philadelphia	31	35	7	3	4	3	88	200
8 Montreal	24	33	8	9	7	5	88	188
9 NY Rangers	34	33	1	7	3	4	87	198
10 Atlanta	29	34	2	7	4	6	83	184
11 Carolina	26	37	5	5	4	5	80	177
12 Tampa Bay	25	36	5	5	4	7	80	176
13 NY Islanders	20	37	6	9	6	6	76	169
14 Florida	24	37	2	3	6	10	77	188
15 Toronto	22	38	3	10	4	4	74	123

Taking a look at the final standings from last season (2009-10) we all remember how Philadelphia had to win in a shootout, on the last day of the Regular Season over the Rangers, to get in. Flyers got the 7th seed, and the Rangers were out.



Under this proposed 5 point game system, that last game of the season actually would have meant nothing to either team. They would have already been locked into the 6th seed (Philly) and 7th (New York). Montreal's miracle run through the first two rounds never should have happened. Their record (i.e. their dependency on Over Time & Shoot Out points) should have kept them outside the playoff picture.

Team	(W) REG W	(L) REG L	(T) OTW	(L) OTL	(W) SHW	(L) SOL	(T) Pts	(G) 5-PT Game
1 Washington	42	25	6	7	5	0	121	279
2 New Jersey	40	27	2	2	6	5	109	238
3 Pittsburgh	33	28	6	5	8	2	101	222
4 Buffalo	35	27	6	8	4	6	100	227
5 Ottawa	34	32	5	1	5	5	94	218
6 Philadelphia	35	35	2	3	4	5	88	204
7 NY Rangers	34	33	1	7	1	6	87	190
8 Boston	25	39	4	4	10	3	81	193
9 Montreal	34	35	6	5	7	5	86	186
10 Atlanta	29	34	7	7	4	6	83	184
11 Carolina	28	37	5	5	4	5	80	177
12 Tampa Bay	25	38	5	5	4	7	80	176
13 Florida	24	37	2	3	6	10	77	159
14 NY Islanders	20	37	6	5	8	5	79	165
15 Toronto	23	38	5	10	4	6	78	170

The West's final standings last season wouldn't have changed in as much of a dramatic fashion. The same 8 teams still would have made the playoffs, though Calgary would have remained in the race longer. (They finished 5 points back of 8th, they'd only be 4 points back under the 5 point system).

Where the biggest shift in the West occurs, is where playoff teams are ranked compared to each other.

Team	(W) REG W	(L) REG L	(T) OTW	(L) OTL	(W) SHW	(L) SOL	(T) Pts	(G) 5-PT Game
1 San Jose	43	20	1	5	7	6	113	257
2 Chicago	37	22	6	2	9	6	112	250
3 Vancouver	43	28	4	1	4	4	103	242
4 Phoenix	33	25	5	1	14	8	107	230
5 Detroit	33	24	1	5	6	9	102	226
6 Los Angeles	32	27	4	1	10	8	100	223
7 Nashville	33	28	6	2	8	4	100	223
8 Colorado	34	30	2	4	7	1	95	213
9 Calgary	35	32	2	3	3	7	96	209
10 Anaheim	33	32	1	3	5	8	89	201
11 St Louis	30	32	1	5	7	1	90	198
12 Dallas	28	31	3	4	7	10	88	194
13 Minnesota	28	30	5	1	5	7	84	190
14 Columbus	27	33	1	2	2	10	79	170
15 Edmonton	18	47	1	2	8	6	62	132

Instead of pretending to be challenging for top spot, Phoenix ends up barley hanging onto 4th. No, their position doesn't change, but everyone's perception of them does. Winning an uncanny 14 games in a shootout made them contenders for first place. If those games were weighted lower than a regulation win, they don't even come close to the top three teams.

There have been two main arguments against changing the system. The additional stats would make the standings too confusing to follow, and it would skew the totals so much that regular seasons point totals would no longer be recognizable.



Both of them are weak, at best.

Up until the end of the 2003-04 season, we kept track of Wins, Losses, Ties, and Overtime Losses. After the lockout those 4 columns were reduced to 3, with Wins, Losses, and Overtime Losses. The NHL would only have to add 1 column to the stat lines they used before the lockout.

Can anyone honestly say 5 columns would be hard to follow? Sounds to me like “confusing standings” is just another excuse why hockey hasn’t become popular in warm climates.

As for the argument that the standings would be skewed, and look nothing like previous year’s point totals, I agree. But so what? The current point totals are meaningless when compared to those of 1990, 1980, 1970, or older. The schedule isn’t the same length, and the 3 point games have already inflated point totals. The idea that we can compare the standings of today against seasons before 2005 is a joke anyway.

Then there’s the reason for instituting the ‘pity point’ in the first place. Way back in the 1999-00 season, the NHL adopted the rule which awards a losing team 1 point, if the loss is in Overtime. The reasoning behind it was pretty simple. Teams got to Overtime, and played for the tie. They didn’t want their hard work to result in nothing, so playing shut down defence for 5 minutes guaranteed them a point. By giving them a guaranteed point in the extra frame, teams would be more likely to play aggressive, trying for the extra point.

Of course the unintended consequence of this, was that teams played even tighter defence in the third period, making sure they’d get to overtime. The new system didn’t really do much to reduce the amount of ties, so the NHL eventually adopted the shoot out.

I say they looked at this from the wrong angle. Teams will always play to earn those extra points. Instead of rewarding losers for making it farther into a game, punish the winners for taking so long to do it.

If teams have to play in a situation where the win is less valuable to them, the longer it takes to achieve it, you can be sure they’ll try their hardest to end the games quicker. Tie games in the 3rd period would be some of the most exciting hockey we’d watch, and overtime would rarely be dull again.

Not only would the fans get to see a more exciting brand of hockey, but we’d have a system that’s actually equitable. A system that doesn’t reward failure. A system that would leave the bad teams behind, and actually give an accurate display of how teams are doing.



The Problem with Today's Card Collecting Is...

By Guy Mitchell aka sweetg1

Let me start by saying what I like about the hobby of card collecting. I like that I can collect (and research) things that interest me. For me in this hobby, it's mostly about collecting Negro League memorabilia and cards. Obviously, not everyone is interested in my type of collection and that is okay. My interest in such a collection began when I learned that my great-uncle played in the Negro Leagues, so I began researching the Negro Leagues and began wanting to know more about them. I then started focusing a collection towards the players that played during this era. Perhaps your own collecting uniqueness lies in collecting significant to you and that's what makes the hobby fun.

While the uniqueness of everyone's collection makes the hobby fun, it can also be a cause of frustration on different levels.

Everyone has the right to collect whomever they want. I get that. However, it sometimes appears that there isn't any loyalty towards a player or a team. Recently, I was trying to trade a particular card of value. I searched on SCF for individuals who collected that individual. Since that player wasn't a particularly highly sought after player, there weren't many collectors. In fact, the previous post of someone looking for that player was about 9 months ago. When I contacted the collector to see if they were interested in trading for my card, they told me that they didn't collect that player any more. They were now collecting who was "hot". They weren't rude about my inquiry, but I could tell by his response that he was wondering why I was contacting him from a 9 month old request. My thought was, I've been collecting the same thing for the last 20 years, so any WTTTF (Want To Trade For) request from me would be valid from the day that I first posted it. "Where's the loyalty?", I wondered aloud. But to each his own way, I concluded.

While I'm not knocking that type of collection, it does seem to create a few other problems. Everyone chases who is "hot". That's not only a problem in hobby, but it seems to be a problem in life. We all want the latest model cell phone, whether it's actually better or not. My silver 2 slot toaster from 1975 beats the new Cuisnart 4 slot toaster/bagel warmer every single time (so much so that I'm thinking about going to an antique store to find that old toaster, but that's another story) and I'll apologize for all the high school boys who dump their girlfriends for the new hot girl. But who or what is "hot" does not imply that it's better. Where is the loyalty, I ask?

What's equally wrong about this, in my opinion, is that the card companies understand this about the collectors. They know that, no matter what, today's collectors will be chasers. We chase what's new, no matter the cost. I find it extremely odd that a card like 2000 Topps Chrome Allegiance Refractor Tony Gwynn books for about \$80. There were only 100 of these made! It's fallen off the collector's radar because the card is 10 years old. However, every kid in America is trying to chase the latest Steven Strasburg card and the value of these Strasburg cards is over \$100. It just doesn't seem right to me. If Strasburg were to suffer the fate of 1980 ROY Joe Charboneau (c'mon kids, look him up), then his \$100 cards will fall to \$1.00 and all of his fans will "drop it like it's hot". This is the sort of thing that turns some collectors away from the hobby. If they spent more time chasing people for the right reason

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(not because he's the latest phenomenon, but perhaps someone from your home town), then they wouldn't be turned off from the hobby. How many chasers of Barry Bonds were disappointed after the steroids scandal? And what happened to the value of his cards? It was one of the things that turned collectors away from the hobby, as well as turning them away from baseball.

Because collectors today chase the current cards, most tend to stay away from the older cards. It used to be that when the cards were old, then they were worth something. It was the low number of Honus Wagner's T206 cards that helped increase the value of it (or at least, one of the reasons). To think that there are only 50-70 more of the aforementioned Gwynn cards around is amazing to me, and both are Hall of Famers. The very mention of 100 Gwynn cards should make it triple digits. What has Strasburg done thus far to warrant triple digits at such a young age, especially when there are 10 times as many cards? That's not to pick on Strasburg, as he's a wonderful talent. However, the card companies understand this and they exploit it, perpetuating the problem.

I think it would be great if the companies sparked interest in older sets or older players. We do see some of the older players (Turn Back The Clock, Cards Your Mom Threw Out, What Could Have Been type set, etc), and those sets are pretty cool. But people don't always seem to understand the history of the game. To wit, I remembered telling a fellow baseball collector about collecting Negro League cards. They had never heard of the Negro Leagues and they weren't familiar with whom might have played during that time. I was 10-20 years older than this collector (I'm 44). I don't mind educating people about that era, but...REALLY? I can understand if folks never heard of Harry "Suitcase" Simpson or James "Cool Papa" Bell (that's who I would have super-collected in the day), but shouldn't we, as baseball fans, have heard of Jackie Robinson? I'm claiming that part of the problem is that nobody is encouraged to look up the history. They are not encouraged to stay loyal to a player or team (even my nephew stated that his new 2nd favorite team is the Heat after LeBron left - Oh brother!), and they're off chasing today's hottest stars. This is what free agency and the Me-Generation of players has brought us and to be honest, I think it stinks. Am I the only one who thinks this way? However, collectors should be encouraged to look up the historical players. Then they might understand something about the game and something about the older cards. I love the fact that collectors can get old cards through the give-away program. I just hope that it encourages them to look up that player and understand their contributions to the game. I often think the players in the game should research the history of the game.

That's just my two cents. Thanks for letting me get that off my chest! Now who wants my huge Joe Charboneau lot? I'll get back to you right after I go pick up my vintage toaster.

Happy trading everyone!

P.S. I'd love to hear if others agree or disagree with me.



A Starting Guide To Card Collecting: Advice From a Veteran By Michael Barton aka MonticelloCards

As someone who began collecting cards in 1986, I have seen this hobby change on numerous occasions. I have had wonderful opportunities in this hobby – from working shows as a teenager to being in charge of the entire sporting collectibles department of a hobby shop. To keep it brief – I have seen a lot in my 25 years. There were times this was a business for me, although I am no longer involved at any level other than as a collector. I implore you to learn from my mistakes and my experiences, as there are many. What I want to lay out in this article is a guide that will help you enjoy this wonderful hobby of card collecting and to find the passion that I and many others have.

In today's card collecting world, it is important to develop a plan of action before jumping in with both feet. With the litany of products produced, you can spend a lot of money chasing cards. So I would suggest that you outline what your interests are and do some research before you start buying or trading. Last year, I had to do this, after my life changed and my priorities had to be reevaluated.

The first thing I did was to set a firm starting budget, and placed myself on a weekly allowance that I could put towards cards and memorabilia. Through my collecting journey, there have been times where I have seriously overspent money on cards and collectibles, and I knew that I had to make some changes in order to find my love for this hobby again. After I set my budget and allowance up, I then began

- taking a look at the products one by one. Thanks to the internet, this is something that is fairly easy to do, although it does take some time. I recently did this again, and set up my plan of action. I placed my collecting interests in tiers. I have provided you with a sample sheet as an appendix to this article.



The tier system worked for me, as I have found my primary interest (Paul Konerko) as well as secondary interests (Bowman Baseball, Donruss Basketball, Rookie Cards from the late 80s). So, my primary interest is a player collection of one player, although you can do anything you want with your collecting interests. I am also working on the sets in my secondary interests, mainly because I love to put together sets and these are fun challenges that I can devote some time to. It also allows me more freedom when it comes to trading cards online. I knew that by being a player collector alone it would limit my ability to trade, so I added a few sets and another project so I could have more things to trade for.

It's important to set goals, and to have a plan in place. I will admit, I used to be a wax junkie, and I would drop money on box after box looking for nothing more than the hits in the product and not caring

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about anything else. On the occasion where I pulled the big hit, I merely sold it to buy more boxes. It became a never ending cycle that left me with nothing but boxes upon boxes of unsorted cards. Having no rhyme or reason to what I was doing, I got to the point where I was not enjoying this as a hobby, and I did take a short amount of time off. That's when I decided to get back to basics.

This hobby isn't what it used to be. Products costing upwards of five hundred dollars for a pack? That type of stuff isn't for me. But each of us has a different disposable income. What I am trying to get across is to use that disposable income in a way that you can maximize your enjoyment, instead of going in blind and wasting money on things you will never look at again. There are many positives to the hobby today versus yesterday. I always share the Rickey Henderson rookie card story with my friends as a lesson.

I wanted the 1980 Topps Henderson rookie when I was a child. With no internet, I went to a few hobby shops near where I lived and had no success. I eventually found the card through a mail order advertisement, and saved money and purchased it for 80 percent of book value. It took close to a month to get my hands on this card. As a collector today, I can just make a post on Sports Card Forum or an online auction site such as eBay, and there are numerous Henderson rookies available at the tip of my fingers. As a seller in today's market, it can be tough because the internet has severely affected supply and demand within the hobby, but as a buyer the internet gives you a cornucopia of options to collect and amass quite a collection in a very short period of time. The entire key to today's hobby and marketplace is doing your homework. Price Guides are nice to have and can be used as a reference point, but the values can be very off base, and, unlike 15 years ago, you cannot really use the pricing structure in the guides as a be all, end all. If you have a card and the guide says it is worth 10 dollars, that does not mean you will get that from a buyer. The guides are much better to use when trading, but I would suggest checking out completed listings on eBay as a buyer to see what you can get, and how much it will cost you.

At the end of the day, I want anyone who reads this to remember a lesson I have often forgotten in the past – HAVE FUN! Find what your collecting passion is, and go forward. Take the time to learn about what you are collecting. Get involved online with trading sites, support your local hobby shop – there are so many avenues available to you these days, and all of them are good. Talk to experienced people and learn from them. Most of the old timers are more than happy to help educate new collectors. You are the future of this hobby...

Check out the collection worksheet on www.sportscardforum.com/articles