

Collectors corner

Feb 2012

Feature

Welcome Back
SPORTSCARDFORUM
Magazine

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

BRIAN PRICE GOES Q&A
WITH THE PEOPLE





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Highs and Lows

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

What a weekend it will be for sports fan! The end of the NFL season is upon us and in what promises to be an amazing event, the New England Patriots take on the New York Giants for Super Bowl 46 and on the hockey front, well fans of the Montreal Canadiens may get to celebrate a truly special anniversary! Find out which one on page 42! Of course, by the time this is published, you will know who the new Super Bowl champions are and whether or not there was a party at the Bell Centre on Saturday. But for now, one thing is almost certain in Montreal, the Canadiens will not make the playoffs. You will notice quite a few articles within our pages regarding the “tremendous” year the Habs are having, what can I say, two of the writing team members (myself included) are devoted Habs fans. I said at the start of the season that I loved that time of the year as every single was within their right to hope for a championship for their team, well it's not the case after the All-Star Game...let's just say the playoff picture is clarifying itself by the day...

While all hope is lost in Montreal, the situation is much different for the town sitting at the other end of highway 20; Quebec city. Yes, every day, the papers' pages are filled with talks of relocation of the Phoenix franchise and even of possible expansion in light of the impending realignment. The Nordiques fans are getting more excited by the minute and you can definitely feel it in the air. Soon, Ottawa fans will even be able to experience their craziness first hand as the Nordiques Nation next outing is scheduled for February 11th during the Sens vs. Oilers game. What is the Nordiques Nation? In short, it is a group which supports the return of the Nordiques in the NHL and tries to drum up support with various actions. For instance, last year they all turned up at a Habs game dressed in Nordiques blue, they took the Nassau Coliseum by storm on another occasion and were even featured on the Times Square's big screen. I'm happy to say that I will be part of the trip to Ottawa. Yes, I am a Canadiens' fan but I do support the return of the Nordiques to the NHL. Why? Well come on, I want the 12 free points we'll get from trashing them each year! What? I have to start practicing my trash talk! I honestly cannot wait for the upcoming fights with my dad who is a Nordiques' faithful.

While I'm Ottawa sporting the Quebec city colors, do not forget to enjoy Hockey day in Canada! Make the most of this yearly event by soaking up everything hockey from all the games on CBC (Ottawa vs. Edmonton, Winnipeg vs. Pittsburgh, Montreal vs. Toronto and Calgary vs. Vancouver) and of course, by attending your local hobby shop to take advantage of the various discounts and to collect the cards released by Upper Deck to commemorate the day! For now though, enjoy the read!



FEBRUARY 2012



Release Dates

At the time of printing, all release dates were correct but as you know, release dates tend to change.

Sports

Upper Deck World of Sports 02/21/12

Basketball

Panini Preferred Basketball 02/27/12

Football

Upper Deck SP Authentic Football 02/07/12

Panini Contenders Football 02/08/12

Panini Totally Certified Football 02/16/12

Panini Prime Signatures Football 02/17/12

Hockey

Upper Deck SP Game Used 02/21/12

In The Game 2011/2012 Heroes and Prospects Hockey 02/23/12

Upper Deck Series 2 Hockey 02/28/12

Panini Elite Hockey 02/29/12





SCF's Live Chat with ITG's Dr. Price

By Richard McAdam aka RGM81 and Sean McCafferty aka 30ranfordfan

On January 6, 2012, In The Game President Dr. Brian Price participated in a chat session with members of SCF. Though the initial impetus for Dr. Price reaching out to SCF to have a discussion was the controversy surrounding the upcoming release of ITG Enforcers (for more information about the product, see the official preview [here](#) the chat was a wide-ranging affair that covered many bases and shed some interesting light on a variety of topics relevant to collectors.

On Enforcers

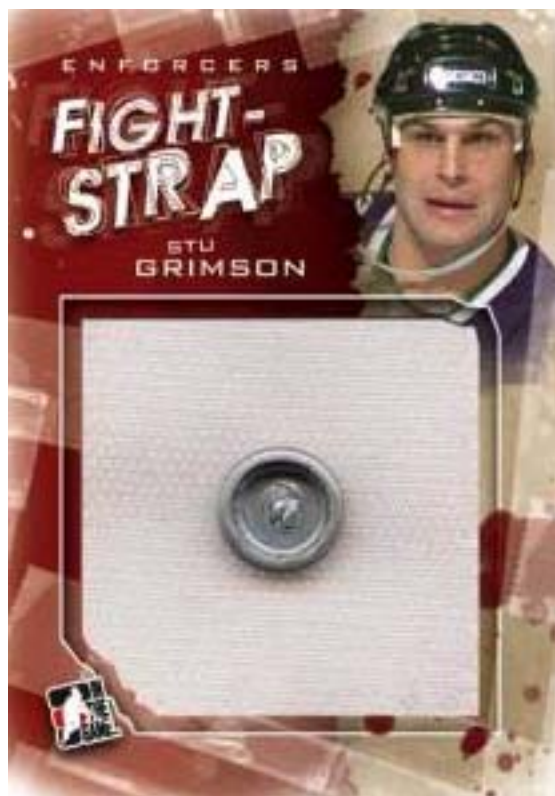
With all the media hubbub created over the product, which features blood-splattered designs and famous fight scenes, Enforcers was thrust into the spotlight. It was originally billed as The Toughest Set Ever Created, and like many ITG products, it drew from the input and feedback provided by collectors. There are many hobbyists that collect cards of their favoured enforcers, players that are admired for their toughness and physical play. Others, who have tragically lost their lives, are collected as a sign of the respect that the collector has for that individual who lost his life due to difficult circumstances. Nobody that collects such dearly departed players like Wade Belak or Bob Probert would view Enforcers in a negative light or think that their deaths were being exploited. This is not even the first ITG product that spotlights players who have graduated from the school of hard knocks. Dr. Price addressed the inspiration for Enforcers, stating, "We did Tough Customers a number of years ago and since then collectors have been emailing me to do another project." There was no mass outcry at the time of that event, yet a handful of opportunistic and politically ambitious people, seeking to capitalize on the emerging trend against violence in hockey, suddenly showed up in the media decrying the product.



One of the most prominent people to publicly distance himself from Enforcers was Georges Laraque. This was very surprising to Dr. Price, who stated in the chat, "Yes, 100%. Georges signed an agreement with us, he was paid and he had no artistic approval rights in his agreement. Furthermore, he knew the nature of the product was enforcers and he talked to our staff about his four toughest fights during the negotiations." This follows a trend with Laraque in recent months, who tends to follow whichever direction the political winds are blowing. Surprisingly, he has not yet condemned the Hollywood film Goon, in which he himself makes a cameo appearance as, you guessed it, an enforcer. A photo of Laraque in full "goon" mode appears on Dr. Price's blog, which can be found at <http://prezsez.wordpress.com>. He also has a special thanks for Laraque, saying, "Enforcers was going to be a niche product until Georges Laraque caused such a fuss. Now I'm really looking forward to it."



The media firestorm and public condemnation from people like Laraque, however, has certainly not dampened collectors' interest in Enforcers. Price says that the media hype actually had a very positive effect on sales, stating, "Sales to the general, non-collecting public have been great. We think the product will be sold-out at release date which is incredible at this time in our hobby." While the opposing forces to Enforcers sought to squelch the product, they in fact seem to have only heightened the passion of fans to collect the cards of players that do not often receive a lot of hobby attention from the other companies. The players themselves seemed to be pretty receptive to the project, as Dr. Price claims a very high rate of response from those that the company reached out to when at the conceptual stage for Enforcers, "We sit in a room and put out a list of players we want for a project and then go out and get them. Some of the Enforcers we wanted for the project did not respond to us, we took that as a "no" but we got over 90% of those we wanted for this particular project." When you factor in that ITG does not have the benefit of a licensing agreement, and has to make individual contracts with every player to appear on the cards, that is no small feat. The checklist for the set is very impressive and covers players from many eras. We look forward to seeing many breaks of the product around the boards!



On Licensing Issues

As collectors are well aware, In The Game has not had a license with the NHL or NHLPA since the lockout season of 2004-05 ended. Since then ITG has continued to make hockey cards by signing agreements with individual players, and by signing agreements with other hockey leagues like the CHL & AHL.

Dr. Price shared his frustrations revolving around the post-lockout exclusive signed by Ted Saskin at the NHLPA, and Upper Deck –shutting him out from the opportunity to continue to make NHL licensed trading cards, in particular the fact that an outstanding redemption program from 03-04 season was unable to be completed.

Adding to the licensing issues, Dr. Price also talked about ITG's loss of a license for Team Canada, and

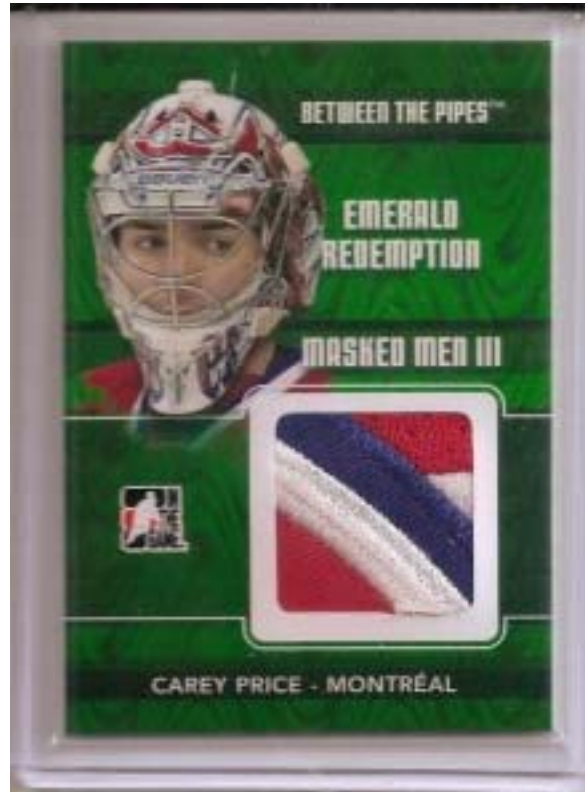


the impossibility of acquiring one for Team USA.

In The Game has recently branched out into baseball as well, releasing a Heroes & Prospects set (similar to their annual hockey release) but no MLB or PA license should be expected in the near future.

Masked Men III Emeralds

Another topic that came up on a number of occasions was the unfortunate error on the 2010-11 Between The Pipes Masked Men III Emerald inserts. These cards were supposed to be numbered to 340, but due to a printing error the cards were all stamped as 1/1's. This created an initial wave of excitement for surprised collectors, until they saw two or three or four other people also pulling that same "1-of-1" card. At the time, Dr. Price immediately took to hobby sites such as SCF to clarify what he characterized as a "debacle," and announced that the company would seek a remedy to the situation. He reflects on that mistake now as "One of my worst days in the hobby was the day of the release when I found out we made that error." It was eventually decided that there would be two programs: for Program A, collectors would send in 17 cards of a player and receive a special redemption card numbered to 10 in return; for Program B, collectors would send in 17 random MIII Emerald cards and receive a random special redemption card numbered to 20 in return.

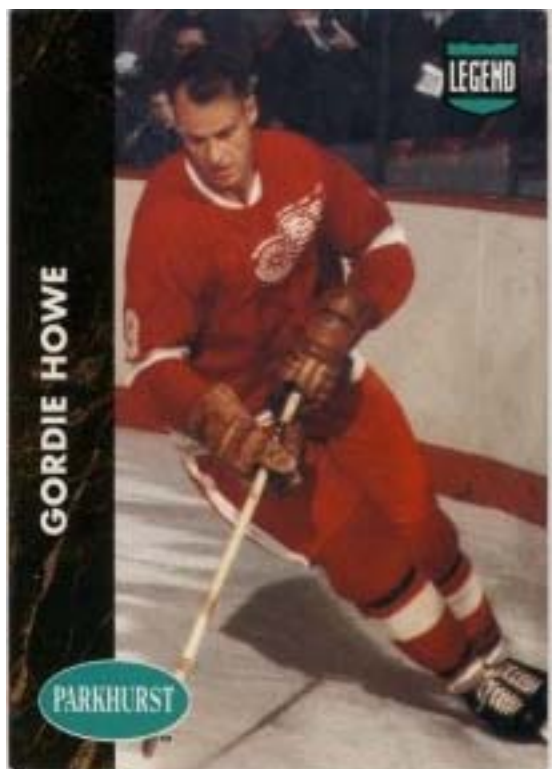


As is customary with ITG, Dr. Price sought to "do whatever I possibly could to make a terrible situation a little better" for collectors. He explained the process of deciding what to do as follows: "We waited until an Expo to canvass collectors and see what they thought we could do to make up for our error and then the redemption program was developed. Once I saw the number of redemptions I felt that using patches where possible would be the right thing to do. I know as a collector, I would have appreciated it after the error and the time and money it took to collect 17 cards." Speaking as a collector that has participated in the program, I can say with great assurance that Dr. Price went far above and beyond "a little better." I recently received my Carey Price redemption card and it is truly a masterpiece on cardboard. Other collectors have also been receiving their redemption cards in recent weeks, and the effort level undertaken by ITG has been truly fantastic.



Biggest Accomplishments & Regrets.

Dr. Price was asked by a member to name what he felt were his three biggest accomplishments and three biggest regrets in the industry. He waited for a while before answering the question, to give himself time to reflect. It was certainly interesting to hear what he was basically describing as the highlights and lowlights of a company with a 20+ year history in the hobby.



The first accomplishment was the licensing of the Parkhurst name to Pro Set back in the early 1990s. After purchasing the Parkhurst brand himself, Dr. Price did not initially get the NHL / PA license he desired. He was able to come to a licensing agreement that let Texas based Pro Set use his Parkhurst name, and bring the historic brand back into the hobby. Having them agree to individually number cases, it was the first occasion where collectors were actually able to know how limited a production run was.

The second accomplishment was the subsequent licensing of the Parkhurst name to Upper Deck. After Pro Set went under, and still without a licensing agreement of his own, Dr. Price was able to work with Upper Deck to continue use of the Parkhurst name. Part of that deal was for the release of three retrospective hockey card products: The Missing Link, Tall Boys, and The Bobby Orr Rookie Year. They remain among Dr. Price's favorite sets today.

The third, and final, accomplishment mentioned was the direct relationship Dr. Price has built with over 1,500 hockey players over the years. The friendships, the stories, and the family feeling at ITG are what he credits the company's success on.

The first regret mentioned was the previously discussed loss of an NHL/PA license, and what a blow to both the company and collectors that really was.

Second, Dr. Price mentioned his loss of working with Gordie Howe. It was Dr. Price who brought Mr. Hockey back into the hobby in the 1990s, and says that he had a great working relationship with the entire Howe family. Eventually Gordie's business affairs were being run by someone outside the family, and before long an exclusive deal with Upper Deck was signed. Since the chat, we've learned that Dr. Price has been able to bring Gordie Howe back to ITG products. Knowing how disappointed he was



by the initial loss of working with Howe, I can only imagine how exciting this was for ITG.

Finally, the third regret mentioned was last year's epic mistake with the Emerald Masked Men cards in Between The Pipes. As already mentioned, cards limited to 340 copies were all mistakenly stamped 1/1. It was an embarrassing situation for In The Game, and one that Dr. Price still feels awful about.

Lots of suggestions

With the opportunity to chat with one of the few people on the planet who does have the power to add your favorite player to the checklist of set, Dr. Price certainly fielded many suggestions and requests for specific players, and themes, to be included in future releases. Among the many requests were Hall-of-Famer Silas 'Si' Griffis, Zach Kassian, Phil Kessel, Dale Hawerchuk, Josh Georges, the use of Skate Blades for memorabilia cards, cards depicting some of the most famous Referees, General Managers, Coaches, and Arenas.

The Captain-C

Dr. Price also spent a few moments to talk about the next 'hits' style release from ITG. Few details are available yet, but product information can be found on the ITG website Once Enforcers and Heroes & Prospects are out – ITG will be releasing a new set called 'The Captain-C'. Due out in March, this new product will feature nothing but players who have been the Captain of their team.. Sounds to be a great assortment of Autographs & Memorabilia and names players like Dave Keon, Bobby Clarke, Jean Beliveau and Roberto Luongo as being included in the set.

We had a great couple of hours chatting with Dr. Price. Was a lot of fun to hear about some of the exciting things going on at ITG, and I know the members that had the chance to participate really appreciated Dr. Price's willingness to join us like that. I know I'm looking forward to next time!





Product Review: 2011/2012 ITG Enforcers

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Box Details

1 pack per box
12 cards per pack
Current Retail Price (online): \$63.99 - \$74.99

Product Highlights

- 5 Autograph Cards in every box
- 2 Game-Used Memorabilia cards in every box
 - Instigator Cards
 - Head To Head Combatants
 - Quad Tough Franchise
- 5 Base Cards in every box
- Subsets include
 - Tale Of The Tape
 - Tough Franchise
 - Bloody Battles
 - Record Holders

Features the best of Hockey's black & blue collar workers.

What we Pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArnOUP19r28>

Base (5)





Barry Beck Autograph



Basil McRae Autograph



Kelly Buchberger Autograph



Kelly Chase Autograph



Combatants Dave Schultz 1-color Jersey/Terry O'Reilly 3-color Jersey





Zenon Konopka Autograph



Instigator Dion Phaneuf Jersey



Final Ratings

Base - 4.5/5

Design - 5/5

Fun - 4/5

Value - 5/5

Rebuy - 5/5

Total - 23.5/25 (90%)

Pros:

Solid design work, especially with the Bloody Battles subset

7 Overall "Hits"

Highly collectible

Well worth the money

Great outside of the box product

Cons:

Sticker Autographs

Hits are placed on top of Base in pack, takes away some excitement

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



Product Review: 2011 Bowman Sterling Football

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

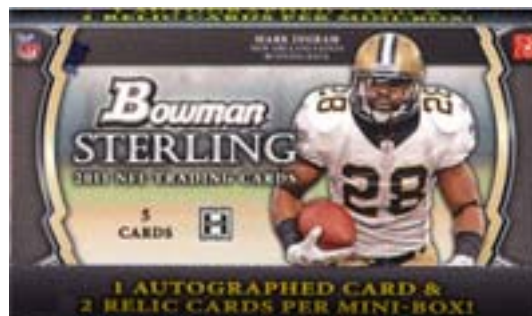
Box Details

6 packs per box

5 cards per pack

1 Dual Relic Box Topper

Current Retail Price (online): \$249.99 - \$269.99



Product Highlights

EVERY 5-CARD PACK DELIVERS:

- 2 Rookie Base Cards (A Rookie Refractor Card replaces a Rookie Base Card when inserted.)
- 1 Autograph or Auto-Relic Card
- 2 Relic Cards

BOX BREAK, EVERY 6-PACK BOX DELIVERS:

- 12 Rookie Cards!
- 4 Autograph Cards!
- 2 Autograph Relic Cards!
- 12 Relic Cards!
- 1 Dual Relic Box Topper!

What we Pulled

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

Base - 2/50 (4%)





Prince Amukamara Jersey



DeAngelo Williams Jersey



Kyle Rudolph White Whale 3-patch/Autograph 1/1



Final Ratings

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

Overall - 17.5/25 (70%)

Pros:

- 20 relics or autographs in every box
- Foil cards
- Rookie Oriented
- One of a handful of products with a Box Topper

Cons:

- Way over priced
- Unnumbered memorabilia swatches
- Sticker Autographs
- For price, all cards should be serial numbered

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



Product Review: 2011 Donruss Elite Extra Edition By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Box Details

20 packs per box

5 cards per pack

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

Box Break

(6) Autographs (on average)

Case Break:

Each 20-BOX CASE yields (4) HOT BOXES, with each HOT BOX containing an average of (10) AUTOGRAPHS!

EACH CASE will contain an average of (136) AUTOGRAPHS!



What we Pulled

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

Base - 20/25 (80%)

Prospects - 61/190 (32.1%)

Aspirations /200 (2) - Starlin Castro, Jordan Akins

Status /100 (1) - Mike Walker



Building Blocks (6)

Elite Series (2)

Yearbook (2)





Aspirations Dan Meadows Autograph /100



Franchise Futures Dwight Smith Jr. Autograph /675



Franchise Futures Chris Heston Autograph /865



Prospects Gerrit Cole Autograph /515





Prospects Francisco Lindor Autograph /557



Status Tony Zych Autograph /50



Final Ratings

Base - 3.5/5

Design - 3.5/5

Fun - 3.5/5

Value - 4/5

Rebuy - 3.5/5

Total - 18/25 (72%)

Pros:

At least 6 Autographs per box

Cons:

Same basic design as previous years

Separate card numbering for veterans and prospects

Peculiar use of the "Rated Rookie" tag

Sticker Autographs

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



Product Review: 2012 Press Pass Racing

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Box Details

30 packs per box

6 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$64.99-\$79.99

Product Description



Each hobby box will include an authentic race-used memorabilia card! Autograph roster is limited to NASCAR Sprint Cup Series drivers including current NASCAR Nationwide contender and future NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Rookie Danica Patrick!

Every 1/2 case includes a Fast Pass Hot Box featuring one autograph, two race-used memorabilia cards & 10 exclusive #d parallels! Every 1/2 case also includes an autograph from one of the following top drivers: Dale Jr, Jeff Gordon, Tony Stewart, Danica Patrick, or Jimmie Johnson!

A special "Power Pick" set, including #d parallels and press plates, available only through this year-long promotional program, bonus autographs and memorabilia cards, instant win redemptions, race tickets, and other great prizes!

What we Pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFf86...g&feature=plcp>

Base: 100/100 (100%)

Dupes: 47

Gold (10)

Platinum /35 (1): Trevor Bayne

Apologies for small scans of group pictures. Brand new computer, so I have to find a different picture cropping program





Chase Contenders Card #0 (1)
 Cup Chase (1)
 NASCAR HOF (1)
 Santa Claus (1)
 Showcar (2)
 Showman (2)
 Snapshot (12)
 The Preferred Line (2)



Triple Gear Mark Martin 3-color Tire /25



Final Thoughts

Base - 5/5
 Design - 3.5/5
 Fun - 4/5
 Value - 4.25/5
 Rebuy - 3.5/5

Total - 20.25/25 (81%)

Pros:

Complete Base Set
 Wide Array of Inserts
 Continuation of NASCAR HOF Series
 Incorporates all three Pro Series

Cons:

Same-old design
 One "hit" versus price paid

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



Jacques Martin's Firing Overdue **By Richard McAdam aka RGM81**

The announcement of Montreal Canadiens' head coach Jacques Martin being "relieved of his duties" reached me while I was at the monthly Halifax card show. Oddly enough, CTV Halifax news anchor Steve Murphy (himself a collector) was the one that broke the news to the hall, having received the information on his Blackberry – word spread quickly and when it reached me I was relieved and happy. Martin's philosophy of defence first had become stifling of the Canadiens' skill and talent, and it was apparent on some game nights that he had lost the confidence of his players. Whatever the reason (or reasons) that general manager Pierre Gauthier believed, sacking Martin was a move that was long overdue to shake up the Canadiens and their dreadful 2011-12 season.

Not too long ago I wrote an article entitled "Can the Habs Save Their Season?" In this article I wrote that there was considerable reason for optimism going into the season, shining a spotlight on the hope for continued improvement from the young emerging core and the belief that there was a bounce-back campaign in the offing for several of the team's veterans. The disappointments that were noted in early November continue to be prominent in late December: there is still no Andrei Markov; the power play was an ongoing disaster until the recent acquisition of Tomas Kaberle; P.K. Subban's slump has yet to be broken, and the swagger he displayed last year seems to have disappeared entirely; and the offence in general has continued to be a pop-gun affair. With the exception of the ongoing Markov saga (more about this later), these are all areas that fall directly under the coach's area of accountability.

Since that November article, there has been an even more disturbing trend emerging from the Canadiens, which can also be attributed to Martin and the style of hockey he coaches. Through the Habs' first 33 games, they have had a lead at some point in the game and gone on to lose 12 times. A number of these have been leads of two goals or more that have held up into the third period. Rather than continue to press the attack and forge an even larger lead, Martin would have his players ease off and go into the prevent defence, resulting in a greater number of shots against. With a raw blueline corps comprised of two rookies and two sophomores, this has yielded numerous late-game collapses and





The most damning evidence of this failed tactical approach came in the recent loss to the Vancouver Canucks. The Habs built a 3-0 lead by the three-minute mark of the second period, beating Luongo three times on just nine shots. Luongo's fragile confidence was clearly shaken, as he was looking to the sky after the second and third goals, and checked behind himself a couple times on even routine saves. Instead of going for the kill, the Canadiens eased the pressure, mustering only 14 shots in the rest of the game, including 5 in the third period and just 1 in the overtime session. The Canucks, meanwhile, had 18 shots on goal in that same timeframe while the Habs' defenders blocked an additional 21 attempts. In failing to press the advantage against a shaken opponent, the Canadiens allowed the Canucks back into the game and the latter took full advantage of the opportunity. While it is true that the Canucks are an elite team in the NHL, the Canadiens played passively and allowed their opponents to tilt the ice for the final 42 minutes of the game. That falls to the coach, and it has been an ongoing source of frustration for many Canadiens fans throughout the season.



Another major item that needed to be addressed with the coaching situation was the team's apparent lack of preparation to play hard for a full 60 minutes. On too many nights it was not until the opposing team had 6 or 7 shots on goal, and several minutes of the first period elapsed, that the Canadiens registered their first shot on goal. "The dreaded late goal" has been a phrase uttered too many times following the Habs surrendering a goal in the final two minutes of a period. The third period of many games has been the Habs' worst, as too many key personnel are worn out by having to kill penalties while also being used on the power play units – it is almost a curse if they go into the third with a lead, as the defensive style of Martin yields a high shots against total that further exacerbates the blueliners and Price. The coach's chief job is to ensure that his charges are prepared to play hockey for 60 minutes, that they have a functional system in place to win games, and that they execute the game plan to victory. By failing in this crucial area, Martin and his lack of communication (he could often be seen after a goal against scribbling in his notepad, rather than trying to fire up the players to get the goal back) had become detrimental to the team's success.

There are, as is the case with any coaching change, extenuating circumstances that may have made Jacques Martin a scapegoat for the team's overall failures. There have been injuries to key—high-



salaried—personnel that have handcuffed the team and forced the Habs to rely on many more young players to be baptized by fire. Some players have not been pulling their weight or not buying into the system, which (when executed to a T) has brought the team considerable success in the past during Martin's tenure. Mike Cammalleri's struggles this year have been well-documented; instead of a goal post or miss here or there, a goal or two along the way may bump the Habs to an extra couple of wins. Price has had a couple of off-nights, which seemed to be incredibly rare throughout his 72 games last year. The young guys, as will forever be the case with young guys, have made some rather costly mistakes at key moments. These are all valid arguments to be put forward for not firing the coach.

However, on balance the Canadiens have simply not been good enough to win on most nights despite having enough talent to be a contender for a division title. I believed at the start of this year that it would be another battle between the Habs and Bruins for Northeast supremacy. The upward trajectory of players like Price, Subban, and Pacioretty, plus the additions of Erik Cole and Andrei Markov (who has de facto not been an active member of the team for the past two years) and stronger years from Gionta, Cammalleri, and Gomez were the three critical factors supporting this belief. This is why GM Gauthier was relatively quiet on the free agent front this past summer, bringing in only Cole and some spare parts while letting established veterans Roman Hamrlik and James Wisniewski go to ply their trade elsewhere. It is only with the hindsight blinders attached that Gauthier has come under criticism for his off-season moves, which is largely an unfair assessment.

If there is one "fair" assessment to be made of the general manager in a negative fashion, it is the decision to re-sign Andrei Markov to a three-year contract for the same dollars that the defenceman had on his previous contract. While there are mutual loyalty sentiments felt between the Habs and Markov, the player's continuing injury saga has been a major distraction while also providing a crutch for some corners to defend the coach's and the team's performance. Let me preface what I am about to say by saying this: I like Andrei Markov and he has been a valuable contributor to the club during his playing years with the Habs. That said, he has not been a full-fledged member of the

Canadiens for almost two years. The organization took a huge gamble by giving him a 3-year, \$17.25M (\$5.75M cap hit) contract in the wake of his latest major reconstructive knee surgery. That expense,





coupled with the Gomez albatross, puts a team already facing a serious salary cap crunch into an even tighter squeeze, which may force out some very good talent that is rapidly approaching UFA status. Even if Markov were perfectly healthy and contributing to the team today, his cap dollars for the next two seasons means that there is less available for pending UFA Josh Gorges and pending RFA P.K. Subban in the blueline role. Thus, while some fans and media will use the excuse “but we don’t have Markov” to excuse the on-ice product, the real significant impact of the Markov contract will be felt off the ice in a larger personnel role.

The absence of a single player, regardless of how talented he may be and how much he may bring to the table, is not a reasonable excuse for losing. Since January 2011, the Pittsburgh Penguins played all of 8 games with both Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin in their lineup; Malkin has missed considerable time with a knee injury and Crosby’s concussion issues are well-documented and, unfortunately, ongoing. Without two of the best players in the world, the Pittsburgh Penguins finished last season 4th in the East and are presently in 5th place this year. No excuses have emanated from Pittsburgh about their tough long-term injury woes, they just go out and win hockey games. The coach’s job is to do the best with what he has, and the Canadiens have enough talent & skill in their ranks to do much better than their current 12th spot in the conference and cellar-dweller position in the Northeast. It is for that reason that it was the right and correct thing to do to let Jacques Martin go and find a suitable replacement – it is the only way that the Habs will be able to overcome the hole they have dug for themselves and hopefully claim a spot in the playoffs.





Taxi for Cammalleri By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

If the Montreal Canadiens made the headlines for the right reasons during their 2009-2010 playoffs run, they are now making them for all the wrong reasons. An abysmal start to the season, a truckload of injuries, a big money contract given to an ageing and hurting defenseman, a coach firing, in-team fighting and , the final straw, incendiary comments by the team's top sniper (when things are going well) closely followed by an in-game trade. No no, this is not the scenario of a sporting soap opera but in fact the outline of the season Habs' fans have



Happier times...

had to live with this year. Currently standing in 12th position in the East, the once mighty Canadiens look to be heading to plenty of golfing hours this spring and the fan base is in turmoil.

Last night, while this agonizing team was battling the current Stanley Cup champions, its General Manager, Pierre Gauthier, was working on a trade. In fact, he has told RDS that he had been trying to trade Cammalleri for over a month... That may be the case but to the fans, it looks like Cammalleri was given a one-way ticket out of town for speaking his mind.

On Wednesday, Cammalleri spoke to two journalists about the team's attitude, his own performance and his ice-time. In Montreal, hockey is always front page news but when a player expressed unhappiness with his team, his teammates and his ice-time, it is even more so. On Thursday, Cammalleri attempted to do so damage control and he said that he was misquoted but by then, the media was already crucifying him, calling him a selfish player and probably encouraging the GM to make a trade as soon as possible. Even if Pierre Gauthier had been working on it for quite a while as he said, the timing does seem awfully suspicious.



After one period last night, Cammalleri had played 4 minutes...After two periods he was up to 9 minutes and that was all he was going to get for that night and forever in a Habs jersey... Between the second and third period, he was told that he had been traded and was put in a cab back to the hotel. While the trade wasn't announced right away, the Habs faithful did notice that the once incredibly popular number 13 was nowhere to be seen in the final period. Speculation began to run wild both on social medias and in the game broadcast. Pierre Gauthier kept the fans guessing until the end of the game before announcing that the scoring hero of the 2009-2010 playoff run had been traded to Calgary, the team he played for prior to inking his deal with the Canadians, in return of Rene Bourque. It wasn't a straight swap as the Habs also sent a prospect in Karri Ramo and received one in Patrick Holland as well as swapping 2012 and 2013 draft picks.

While most of the reporters in Quebec seem to welcome the deal and think that Cammalleri had become a distraction, the fan base is split. There are those who tend to agree with the media and those who cannot help but remember Cammy's 13 goals in the Habs' epic playoff run in 2009-2010 and feel like they have been betrayed by the General Manager. Of course, it is a well known fact that the Habs had and have too many small players; Cammalleri, Gionta, Gomez, Desharnais...the list goes on. No one is disputing the fact that the Canadians need to get bigger, but there are plenty of people who would have liked to see someone else rather than number 13 be shipped out of town. Scott Gomez being most people's favorite candidate but the problem is, who would want to take him ridiculously expensive contract on? No one...that's why he will remain in the Canadians line-up this year and probably be bought out this summer to clear some much needed cap space. As for Gionta, he has just undergone successful bicep surgery (let's hope it's not the same kind of successful surgery Markov keeps having) and it is possible that his season is over. Are the Habs done trading? Is the season a write-off? Gauthier says he has not given up on the season and he believes he has improved his team...time will tell if such is the case.

For now, Habs fans will have to wait until Sunday to see their new player in action. Bourque is currently serving a 5 game ban for yet another hit to the head. One thing is for sure, he will bring some size and toughness to the team. The Canadians cannot get rid of their "Smurfs" label yet but this is a step in the right direction towards achieving that result. Will Bourque be able to contribute enough offensively to replace Cammalleri on the team? It's too early to tell, he's not as skilled as the diminutive winger but his upside is that he can use his size to get in crowded place and shift his weight around in front of the net to create both goals and opportunities. Something the bleu, blanc, rouge will certainly be able to use in games against big teams such as Boston and Philadelphia...

For now, the world can stay tune to see what else the storied franchise has in store for us this year, only one thing is certain, it's not a playoff run...Those days are gone and so are the days when the Montreal Canadians' organization was a synonym of class.



It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

Well football fans, after an action packed season from the uncertainty as to whether or not there would even be a season to some of the most exciting playoffs games we've ever seen, it is finally time for the main event; Super Bowl XLVI! While many believed that the Green Bay Packers would be in a position to defend their champions title, it is the New England Patriots and the New York Giants who will be squaring off in Indianapolis! It wasn't an easy road to glory for either teams and here is how the post season went.

Wildcard week

The Patriots had a week off as they finished top and didn't have to go through this additional hoop. As for the Giants, they faced the Atlanta Falcons who, unfortunately for them, were nothing short of destroyed. Eli Manning's well oiled machine triumphed by a score of 24-2 against the poor Falcons.



Divisional week

This was an excellent week for football fans as we saw some truly amazing match-ups. For a start, the Giants managed to show the Packers out of the playoffs with a convincing win 37-20. We also got to witness a last minute win by the surprising San Francisco 49ers who benefited from "the catch 2" to see off the New Orleans Saints. As for the Pats, they put the Teebow-mania to rest by teaching the Broncos a 45-10 lesson while the Ravens cut the Texans' playoff season short.

Conference week

After the previous week, everyone was looking forward to two excellent match-ups; the Pats vs. the Ravens and the Giants vs. the 49ers. One thing is for sure, we were not disappointed with two games which treated us to dramatic endings! The Patriots didn't win their game...no, the Ravens lost it with many turnovers and with a missed field goal in the dying seconds from the 32 yards line. That is one miss kick that Billy Cundiff will never forget. As a cinema fan, this truly reminded me of the Ace Ventura movie and I couldn't believe it when the attempt was no good but hey, I am a Pats' fan so let's face it I was in heaven!





In the NFC final, the Giants were more or less handed the win by a 49ers player...yes Kyle Williams managed to commit two terrible turnovers which would ultimately cause the fall of the 49ers. It's not because Vernon Davis didn't try, he caught a couple of touchdown passes again but it just wasn't enough. Even though San Francisco took the dual to overtime, New York looked like the better team and deserved to book its place for Super Bowl 46.

Super Bowl Week

As I write this, we are still a few days away from the biggest game of the year and I fear it's time for me to make my prediction. As I've said earlier, I am a Patriots fan so you will not be overly surprised to hear me say that New England will take this one. I feel the time has come for the Brady bunch to avenge their defeat at the hands of the Giants back in 2008. Since then, a lot has changed and I think Brady has come back stronger than ever since his awful September 2008 knee injury. Furthermore, the Pats now have Gronkowski who is one outstanding tight end if I ever saw one. It certainly will not be easy for the Pats though and I can see this game ending with a 3 points difference, perhaps 31-28. There you have it, that's my call. If I'm right, good on me, if I'm wrong, remember I at least had the guts to make a prediction...unlike the guys from the football team ;).





Around the Rink

By Richard McAdam aka RGM81



Well, January has certainly seen to it that 2012 is off to a bang! There has been a lot of action happening both on the ice and in the hobby, and all signs point to a great year for fans and hobbyists.

SCF was very proud to host a wide-ranging discussion with In The Game President Dr. Brian Price early in the month. The chat session covered many bases: the new Enforcers product, Masked Men III Emerald redemptions, Dr. Price's personal highlights and lowlights in his many years in the hobby, and much more. He revealed also that there will be an exciting new product being released later this hobby season and that planning for the 10th anniversary edition of Between The Pipes is destined to make it the best release yet. For a full recap of the chat session, be sure to

read the article co-penned by myself and 30ranfordfan elsewhere in this issue of Collector's Corner.

By the time you read this the NHL's annual talent showcase in Ottawa at the All-Star Game will have concluded. Team Alfredsson squared off against old hometown favourite Zdeno Chara's squad, while the NHL's elite players dazzled everybody with the Skills Competition. Both Upper Deck and Panini were in attendance at the weekend festivities with their always-popular wrapper redemption programs. Panini had some really cool cards spotlighted on their blog – did you end up with any of the fancy manufactured patches or specially-made autographed cards? If so please be sure to post them in the Show & Tell section!

As we move into February, it is becoming clearer as to which teams will be buyers and which will be sellers at the trade deadline. The playoff race is still pretty wide open and teams will be looking to improve their rosters so that they can secure a spot and go on a deep run in the post-season. Other teams, meanwhile, will be looking to get some value out of impending UFA assets and re-stock for next year. We know that TSN will have their usual all-day coverage on what is quickly becoming an unofficial February holiday for many hockey fans. Which big names will be moved? We'll just have to tune in and find out.

We hope that you have been checking out the Contests Forum regularly in recent months. We have some truly special contests happening this year, where you can find free boxes of product, a special signed Carey Price jersey, more free product, and even a chance to attend the season finale between the Canadiens and the Leafs on April 7th and have the opportunity to meet some of the players. We are hoping to add even more contests soon, so be sure to be on the lookout!



After a rather slow month on the product release calendar in January, February is shaping up to be very busy. Panini will be releasing Crown Royale (now featuring Silhouettes of rookies and veterans alike) on the 1st and Elite will make its hockey debut on the 29th; Upper Deck will be unveiling the latest editions of SPx on the 1st, SP Game Used on the 21st, and Series 2 on the 28th; and ITG Heroes and Prospects returns on the 23rd. It will be a great month of box breaks, case breaks, and singles purchases for collectors, just in time for the stretch drive to the playoffs! To whet your appetite, check out these preview pics from this month's products!





12 Questions for 2012

By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy

With the Nascar season quickly approaching the great championship run between Tony Stewart and Carl Edwards will soon be an afterthought. Many story lines and new stories are waiting to be told in just a few weeks as the sport will kick off with its biggest race, the Daytona 500. This is as good as any place to start the official 12 questions for 2012.

1. Will the Two-Car Tandem Drafting Go Away?

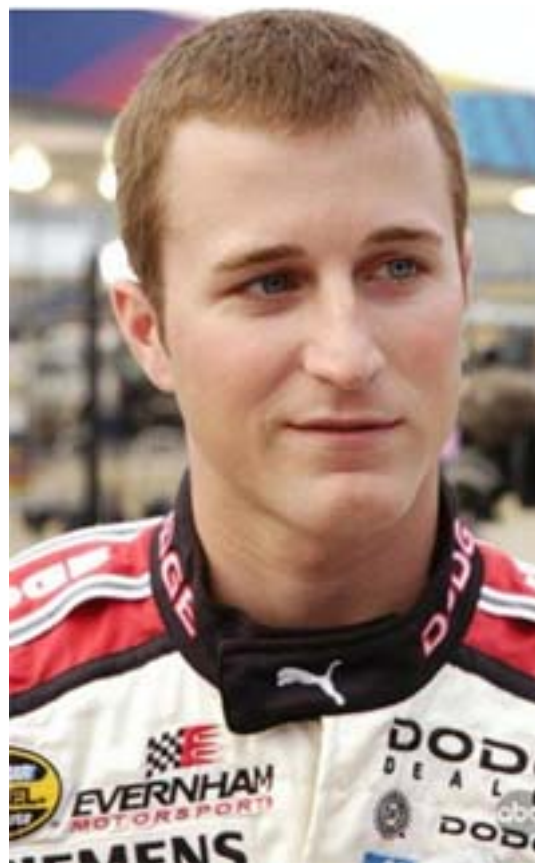
Nascar has tried countless tricks in the off-season to rid the sport of this new-found drafting secret that has been evolving over the last few years at the restrictor plate tracks. It was somewhat of a Pandora's Box for drivers as the speed increase was considerable when paired with one other car in line. Although it's simple aerodynamics and the goal of racing is to go fast, the tandem racing leads to a multitude of problems, the biggest of which in Nascar's mind is that the fans are not pleased with it and they want the old pack racing back. Will we see pack racing? Judging from the January test session maybe some but more than likely the two-car tandem is here to stay.

2. Who is the Championship Favorite?

After last year's remarkable run by Tony Stewart dethroned 5-time consecutive champion Jimmie Johnson the field finally showed its true diversity. Coming into 2012 last year's runner up Carl Edwards is probably the favorite for the title. Carl has everything lined up to make another strong run at the title, but he will have to break the recent 2nd place jinx and also contend with many strong competitors, mainly Stewart, Gordon, Johnson, Kenseth, and Kyle Busch.

3. How will Kasey Kahne do?

A vastly talented driver who has been stuck in the wrong situation team-wise for most of his career now has a stable ride with the team most consider the best in the sport with Hendrick Motorsports. Kahne carried the #4 Red Bull car to a win late last year and comes into his new team with momentum and most of his crew, including longtime crew chief Kenny Francis. Kahne should contend.





4. Can Denny Hamlin Rebound?

After choking away a championship in 2010 Hamlin and his Fed Ex team struggled mightily in 2011, scoring only 1 win and not contending in the Chase. Darian Grubb has been brought in to crew chief Hamlin's ride and should have a positive impact. Look for Hamlin to be considerably better in 2012.

5. Will Jimmie Johnson Get Back on Track?

It is honestly a funny question, but Johnson is coming off his worst season as a Cup driver. 7th in points with 2 wins would be considered a great year to most drivers and teams, but to Johnson and his dynasty 2011 was a disappointment and more memorable from a rivalry standpoint than from a dominate standpoint. People should not expect the 48 to falter and should expect them to be top 5 material.

6. How Will Danica Patrick Fare?

Media darling and female hotshoe Danica Patrick officially comes to Nascar full-time in 2012 running 10 Cup Series races for Tony Stewart and a full Nationwide Series Schedule for JR Motorsports. Danica is often over-exposed for a variety of reasons but her talent behind the wheel is somewhat underrated. She has proven a fast learner and might contend for a few Nationwide wins and a top 10 points finishing position. Expect her to struggle in Cup though.



7. Can Kurt Busch Keep His Temper Under Control?

After countless blowups over the radio and in the media the last few years Roger Penske pulled the plug on the talented but hot-headed Busch at the end of 2011. Busch now finds himself in lesser equipment with less of a chance to win. It remains to be seen if the experience will finally humble Busch and calm his volatile attitude.

8. Will AJ Allmendinger Win a Race?

Busch's misfortune was AJ's good fortune, as Penske hired him to take over the #22 car, one of the best funded and best running cars in the sport. This season is do or die for Allmendinger as he has to prove himself worthy of the top equipment. Expect Allmendinger to contend for a win or two, possibly at Dover.

9. Who Will Be the Surprise of 2012?

Last year's surprise was no doubt Brad Keselowski, who came from nowhere to win 3 races and compete strongly in the chase. Allmendinger his new teammate could be the surprise of the season but as of right now it remains to be seen.



10. Is Michael Waltrip Racing Finally Legit?

Maybe. The team secured Mark Martin and Clint Bowyer over the off-season, giving them a strong 3-car lineup. If the equipment can match the quality of the drivers (particularly Bowyer) they could actually contend on a regular basis.

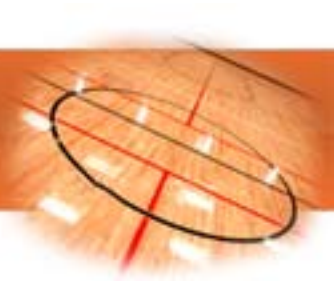
11. Travis Pastrana-Nitro Circus Sideshow or Serious Driver?

The answer to this is probably both. I expect everyone's favorite wild man to destroy a lot of cars in his Nationwide debut season but nonetheless it will be entertaining, as everything Pastrana does tends to be.

12. Can Dale Jr. Break His Winless Streak?

Probably the #1 question in most of Junior Nation and Nascar Nation at the moment is this one. Jr came close last year at Charlotte and at Martinsville. My crystal ball says he breaks it this year.





Basketball Happenings

By Jay Weger aka Jay520

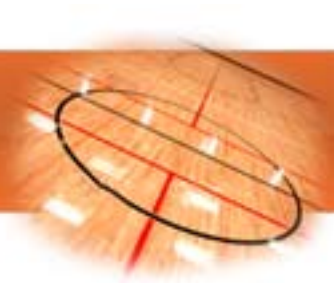
Contests & Winners

The 2011-12 NBA Top Performers contest returned at the start of the NBA season to a good response with several participants trying to predict who would be tops in scoring, rebounding and assists on a nightly basis. The December/January point total through 1/29 is tk10775 and anttheman tied in 1st place with 32 points and rocketfaqn86 in second with 30 points who will receive 100 CC and 50 CC respectively at the end of the month. 3rd place is Thrillseeker with 28 points and in 4th is jdlee123 with 27 points. pwaldo leads the NBA GTS reGULAR member contests with 5 wins through 1/30 while JesRey and BC26 are tied in 2nd with 3 wins. 3rd place has aharner55, andrewhoya, gardzy99, SingleDaddyof2, samoan3d, Tamtalized, TrFstPtch and TurdFerGUs on all tied with 2 wins each. In the VIP NBA GTS through 1/29 gladdyontherise leads with 9 wins followed by andrewhoya with 7 wins in 2nd. bouncer is 3rd with 6 wins and JBpatches, pwaldo and Tamtalized are tied in 4th at 4 wins each. Returning to the basketball Show & Tell section will be Theme Weeks so if you have a card you believe will win that week please submit it to show it off. And lastly the NBA All-Star game will be this month and a contest for it will be popping up in the basketball contests section.

Hobby News

The anticipated news on new products from Panini came on December 20th with the announcement of only 5 products hitting the shelves for the season. The 5 are Panini Preferred, NBA Hoops, Panini Limited (May), Panini Past and Present (June) and Panini Gold Standard (July). Panini Preferred a high end product will make its way to collectors on February 29th at \$200 a pack containing just 4 cards. The 4 cards will consist of 3 autos and 1 multi swatch booklet. Of the autos there will be 4 different styles with Crown Royal being the base set, Silhouette GU/autos, Panini Preferred and Panini Choice triangle autos #'ed to red/74, blue/50, silver/25, gold/10 emerald/5 and black 1/1. NBA Hoops will hit the shelves on MaRCh 14. Looking at \$72(hobby version) a 36 pack box(2 autos), \$1 retail(\$2 hobby) packs with 7 cards per pack containing 1 glossy parallel. The lure of this product will be the 89-90 buyback autos of David Robinson, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson and others. UD has a Fleer Retro product slated for a "MaRChish" date banking on the late 90s auto and insert craze.

While the season got underway in late December, collectors were still buying up what they could of the hard to pull 90s inserts. MJ and Kobe led the way of the most highly sought after inserts from 97-98 and 98-99 products. With the Precious Metal Gems cards skyrocketing collectors have turned to 10-11 Totally Certified Green set /5 being the new hard to find craze collectors are shelling out big bucks for. Green /5 were selling in the \$20 to \$30 months ago but stars are commanding \$200+ today. With only 5 products coming from Panini, collectors were hoping to pull the new rookie GU and autos of Jimmer Fredette and Derrick Williams but that will not be the case this year. No Rookie photoshoot was held due to the lockout meaning no GU or autos this year of the top draft picks. Panini is promising there will be redemptions for both the 2011-12 and 2012-13 rookie classes in Limited and Gold Standard.



NBA NEWS

By Kevin Rhyne aka Tarheelsnipe

We finally have a season.

The owners and NBA Players Union agreed to terms in late December to save the 2011-12 season. The schedule is shorter with only 66 games, and this could have a big impact during the playoffs. Some teams like the Clippers and Heat only have one game against each other this season. This could affect home court advantage if these two teams meet in the NBA Finals. Injuries will play a bigger role in teams' successes this year. Recovery times for damaged joints are still 6-8 weeks regardless of the shorter season.

Teams to beat so far:

OKC 15-3 – They're the top team in the West so far. Big wins include Dallas, Orlando, San Antonio, and New York. Westbrook just signed a fat \$80 million contract, so the long-term commitment is there – this team likes to play together.

LA Clippers 10-5 – Are near the top of the West landing Chris Paul in free agency. Big wins include back-to-back wins against Miami and the "other" LA team. Can Paul stay healthy?

Chicago 16-4 – Some big time wins early in the season. Their victims include the Lakers, Clippers, Hawks (Atlanta got revenge a few days later with a win), and Celtics.

Miami 13-5 – When they didn't win the Finals last year, it was due to the lack of chemistry. Well, it's been a year so the team shouldn't look for a lot of sympathy from the Miami fans if they come up short of anything but a title. Dallas, Boston, Minnesota, Atlanta, and L.A. Lakers have felt the Heat. The other L.A. team held their own against Miami.

My MVP candidate list (let the debate begin):

Kevin Durant

Lebron James

Blake Griffin

Kobe Bryant

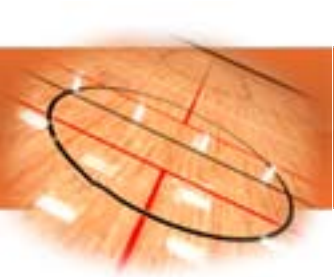
Dirk Nowitzki

Dwight Howard

Derrick Rose

Kevin Love

USA Basketball named the finalists for the 2012 Olympic team. The final roster deadline is June 18th. Here are the names:



LaMaRCus Aldridge (Portland Trail Blazers)
 Carmelo Anthony (New York Knicks)
 Chauncey Billups (Los Angeles Clippers)
 Chris Bosh (Miami Heat)
 Kobe Bryant (Los Angeles Lakers)
 Tyson Chandler (New York Knicks)
 Kevin Durant (Oklahoma City Thunder)
 Rudy Gay (Memphis Grizzlies)
 Eric Gordon (New Orleans Hornets)
 Blake Griffin (Los Angeles Clippers)
 Dwight Howard (Orlando Magic)
 Andre IGUodala (Philadelphia 76ers)
 LeBron James (Miami Heat)
 Kevin Love (Minnesota Timberwolves)
 Lamar Odom (Dallas Mavericks)
 Chris Paul (Los Angeles Clippers)
 Derrick Rose (Chicago Bulls)
 Dwyane Wade (Miami Heat)
 Russell Westbrook (Oklahoma City Thunder)
 Deron Williams (New Jersey Nets)

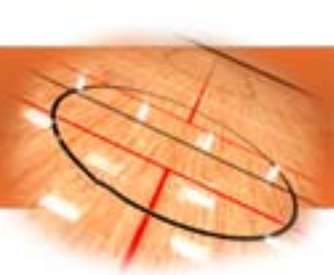
Coach Colangelo has made it clear that he will not pick the 12-man roster based on popularity. His coaching staff will select the 12 players that will give them the best chance to win a gold medal. They will analyze the players' abilities and the opponents they'll face, and make a selection based on how the players can complement each others' skills.

By the numbers:

56 – Points scored by the Magic in a loss against the Celtics – Franchise low.
 39 – Number of free throws taken by Dwight Howard against the Golden State Warriors – a new NBA record!
 30 – Kobe's scoring average so far this season as of this article – NBA leader.
 29 – LeBron's scoring average so far this season as of this article – 6 PPG climb with D-Wade sidelined with injuries... and they're winning ballgames.
 18 – Number of double-double games by NBA leader Kevin Love.
 4 – number of consecutive 40-point games by Kobe Bryant.

Pack/Box Breaks

Over the holiday break there were many box breaks. So the first half is the newer products and second half is the old school breaks. Starting with Panini Elite Black Box RAFAEL311 pulled a Kobe Bryant

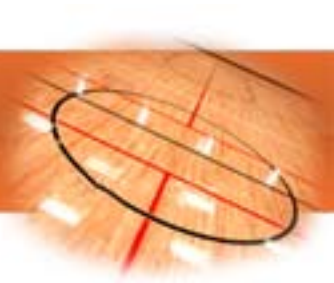


USA Flag Patch auto/149. bdoody42 pulled a Ander Igoudala/Julius Erving Passing the ToRCh dual Logoman GU/99 and a Devin Harris dual GU auto/25. McPUG got 2 boxes and got a Tracy McGrady auto/8, Worthy/Wilkins/Floyd Draft Classes prime patches/99 and a Tyson Chandler/Sam Perkins Passing the ToRCh dual Logoman auto/25. beju opened a box and did well getting a Steve Nash base 3/5, Isiah Thomas auto redemption, Stephen Curry Black and blue auto/39 and sweet Champion Materials Lakers booklet containing patches of Kobe/Bynum/Fisher/Odom /25 and lastly, poipounda had the best box hitting a Kevin Durant Thunder Struck auto /10.10-11 Gold Standard was still popular as bdoody42 hit a Steve Nash/Jason Kidd Gold Mining dual auto/10. RWC got a John Stockton Golden Age GU/299 and a Larry Johnson Gold Medalists GU auto/99. jprk31 pulled a John Stockton gold Records GU/49 and a Derrick Rose Gold Nuggets GU/199. McPUG got 2 boxes pulling a LaMaRCus Aldridge Gold Team patch auto/199, Derek Fisher Platinum base/25, Kobe Bryant Gold Rings GU/249, Chris Paul Gold Medalists GU/299 and Joakim Noah Gold nuggets patch/25.

Peyton18Manning hit a Daimon James/Dexter Pittman dual auto/10 and a sick Michael Jordan Supreme Court auto 2/5 from a box of 10-11 SP Authentic. legend33 opened 7 boxes of 11-12 SP Authentic hitting several Jordan Brand Classic GU and a few nice By the Letter autos but his best hit was a UNC floor auto of Michael Jordan/23. bigp261 opened a case getting his Michael Jordan By the Letter auto/269 along with a Klay Thompson Gold auto/25, John Havlicek Home Court Signatures, James Worthy College Pride auto/5 and a Larry Bird By the Letter auto2/5. flashie007 opened 3 boxes of 10-11 National Treasures pulling 3 case hits being a Kobe Bryant Timeline Signature Materials Custom Names/25 redemption, Wall/Cousins/Patterson/Bledsoe Pen Pals quad auto/10 and a Rajon Rondo Colossal prime NBA Logoman auto 1/1!! Ravensgc 5 pulled a bill Walton auto from 10-11 Ultimate Collection. Met4life hit a Laimbeer/Dantley/Rodman triple auto/10 from Ultimate as well. MRFINLEY broke a 15 box case with the highlights being a Thompson/Walton Rivalries dual auto/25, Laettner Personal Touch auto/25, Brandon Roy All-Time Draft silver auto 4/5, Larry Bird Shout Out auto/35 and a LeBron James auto/25.

Other big hits were Quigley24 who hit a Blake Griffin Inscriptions auto out of 09-10 Panini. BigGums7 also hit a Blake Griffin RC auto/50 from 09-10 Prestige. kurt420cobain hit a Clyde Drexler auto from a random retail box. bdoody42 hit a Gerald Wallace patch/10 from 10-11 Limited and a Terrico White RC patch autogreen/5 from 1-11 Totally Certified.txrangers21 hit a Marcus Camby green base/5 from 10-11 Totally Certified as well. bigp261 hit a Blake Griffin Monikers Gold auto/99 from 10-11 Limited. And lastly vinny407 hit a big Shaq triple patch 3/3 from 06-07 Topps Triple Threads.

Old school breaks saw JordanFanatic pull a Michael Jordan Meltdown insert (\$40BV) from a box of 95-96 Skybox. jbball50 opened some packs of 96-97 UD to hit a Jordan Fast Break Connections insert(\$30BV). Then he opened 54 packs of 97 SPx getting 2 Kobe RCs, Michael Jordan and a Grant Hill Holoview Heroes insert. McPUG had a lot of old school hits starting with 97-98 Hoops with a Vlade Divac Autographics, Eddie Jones High Voltage insert but his best where from 97-98 Ultra being a Scottie Pippen Star Power Plus parallel insert and a sick Hakeem Olajuwon Star Power Supreme



insert(\$80BV). WillC opened 30 packs of 97-98 Z-Force hitting a 1:96 pack odds Quick Strike Michael Jordan insert(\$80BV). jbball50 pulled a Allen Iverson That's Jam insert(1:96 odds) from 12 packs of 98-99 Skybox Premium. WillC got a couple nice hits from 98-99 Metal universe in Two 4 me, Zero 4 You Rodman insert(1:96) and 98-99 Skybox Premium 3D's Stephon Marbury insert(1:96). The best old school card hits came from luckyrollers who pulled a Michael Jordan Intimidation Nation insert and had it graded to get a BGS 9.5(\$350BV). McPUG hit a 98-99 Thunder Kobe Noyz Boyz insert worth \$300 to go with a 98-99 Hoops Shaq Slam Bams /100 insert parallel with a BV of \$500!!

Super Collector/Collecting Milestones

BigAl_83 is the newest addition to the Super Collector elite with an impressive Al Jefferson card collection. He doubled the percentages needed in GU and autos and has an amazing 21 1/1's(13 of which are GU/autos). BigAl_83 (Daniel) started collecting Jefferson right after his trade to Minnesota in 07. It was Jefferson's low post game that he admired but after seeing interviews of Jefferson helping out children and families in need, hi interest in him was really cemented.

His Al Jefferson Top 10:

10. 07-08 UD Black Jsy/Patch /25,
9. 07-08 Premier Auto/Jsy Melo/BigAL /25,
8. 04-05 Exquisite RC Patch/Auto /225,
7. 08-09 SP Authentic Varsity Letter Auto /5,
6. 04-05 SP Signature Triple Auto AL/Bird/PieRCe /25
5. 10-11 National Treasures Logoman/Auto /4
4. 05-06 SP Authentic Triple TMac/BigAL/D.Howard /15
3. 08-09 Exquisite Triple Jsy/Auto BigAL/Love/Brewer /3
2. 07-08 Exquisite Scripted Swatches Garnett/BigAL /5
1. 08-09 Premier Preeminence Auto 1/1

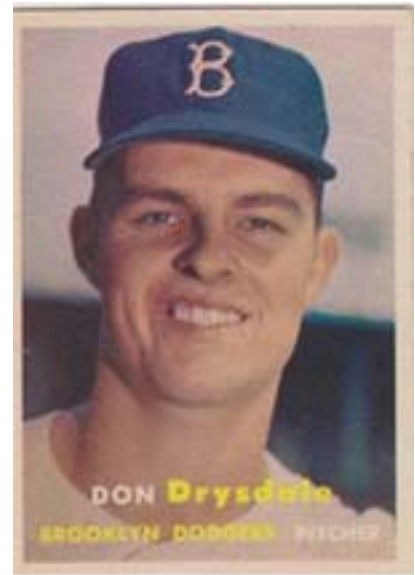
In addition to the Super Collector inductee there are a few Collecting Milestones members have made in the past few months. First is jrnelson who completed the 06-07 UD Black Patch Numbers/25 redemption set. Notable players in the set are Kobe Bryant and Jason Kidd amongst others. jprt80 has finished the 09-10 Court Kings rookie auto set(121-150). With the likes of Blake Griffin, Curry and Tyreke Evans all /649 that is awesome. Next is MRFINLEY who took on and completed the entire 09-10 UD Game Materials Dual 100 card set that spans retired stars such as MJ, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird and current stars as LeBron, Melo, CP3 and Dwight Howard on the same card. To finish the collecting milestones achievement is nadeau01_johnson48 who put together the entire 10-11 Threads Team Threads home and away set of rookies and vets. This 180 card set took him 10 months to complete.



All Grown Up By Brad Wingate aka BBonds25

I think I finally grew up, as a collector at least. Like most everyone else, I used to chase the shiniest, shortest print, or highest priced card I could find. I used to buy packs and boxes just because I could. But, after 25+ years of collecting, I think I finally figured it out.

Thanks to my neighbors, I started collecting baseball cards in the summer of 1986, and the first card I remember pulling from my first pack was a Topps Mike Smithson. I was hooked! I would ask my parents for a pack or 2 of cards each time they went to the store. Soon, I was getting boxes and complete sets as holiday gifts (I must say, my parents were very supportive of my new hobby). As the collecting world progressed into the 90s, I went insert crazy. If it was die-cut, Duflex, or Refracted, I wanted it. Rookie cards were, and still are, a high point in my collection, but at that point, they took a back seat to these shiny pieces of cardboard heaven.



As the world celebrated the new millennium, I actually stopped collecting for a few years. Unfortunately, this was during 2001, so I missed out on Albert Pujols RCs (still don't have one actually). But starting in 2003, a few things happened. First, in April of '03, I discovered Sports Card Forum. Second, I used this new found site to add to my modest collection of Barry Bonds cards (and boy, did I make some stupid trades back then). And third, I fell hard for Chrome, especially Bowman Chrome Draft. I spent a lot of time building chrome sets and adding other RCs to my collection that I had missed from previous years. This chrome obsession lasted until late last year. Then, something strange happened. I finally found what I believe to be the real reason to collect cards.

I came to a realization when I made a trade for a 1957 Topps Don Drysdale RC that looked like it had been kept in someone's shoe as they walked to school each day. It is creased, its corners rounded, and slightly faded, and I didn't care. Soon after I traded for a 1950 Bowman Red Schoendienst with a pin hole, a trimmed 1940 Play Ball Barney McCoskey, and a 1952 Topps Larry Doby that makes the aforementioned Drysdale look very good. Here is what I realized; that these cards have a history. Some of them are over 60 years old, and who knows what they have been through, or who used to own them. I know it's probably a long shot, but some of these cards may have at one time been owned by some of our modern day leaders and heroes. Maybe they were the pride and joy of a young boy who later grew up to serve our country in Vietnam. Or maybe they just belonged to some kid who had to do yard work for his elderly neighbor just to get enough money to buy a pack of cards. Whichever it is, I don't care. It is that history that brings me great joy when I get a 1948 Ralph Kiner that looks like it was chewed on by a mouse... I'm happy to say that at 32, I finally grew up (a little).



Topps' Mistake + my Honesty = Winning!

By Matthew Ford aka Greengoblin782

I posted this in the Football Card Talk Forum but thought some more people would see this article here.

During the summer, I opened six boxes of 2011 Topps Platinum Football with my father. We didn't pull anything crazy opening them. We did however pull two redemption cards. That same day I entered the codes on our account. We pulled a Jerod Mayo Auto Gold Refractor Veteran Patch Card. Back on December 06, 2011 we received a package from Topps. We didn't receive the Gold Jerod Mayo Autograph that we were supposed to get, but instead got the Jerod Mayo Superfractor Patch Autograph 1/1.



I noticed right away that this was not the card we were supposed to receive so we called Topps there and then. We were on the phone explaining that we are collectors of sports cards and that the card belonged to someone else and that we would want to do the right thing and send it back. The Topps Customer support worker that we talked to tried to look it up but couldn't find anything about it. He said, if Topps sent it to us that we were supposed to receive it. He thanked us for our honesty in coming forward with it. We put the Superfractor in a new magnetic case and put it away with our other football cards.

Time passed by into January. I didn't have service on my cell phone for a few weeks because I lost it. I decided it was time to get a new phone so I did. I had one voice message from Topps saying that they shipped me the wrong card and could we send it back. I called back to the number they left and told our story 3 different times on how we knew it was not our card to begin with and wanted to do the right thing ahead of time. We said alright, and that we would send the card back on January 19, 2012. We are glad that we sent it back because if I ever pulled a Superfractor redemption and Topps made a mistake by sending it to someone else, I sure hope they would call Topps and say something about it.

Today I receive a package from Topps with a letter.

Topps Co.
401 York Ave
Duryea, Pa 18642





Dear Matthew:

Thank you very much for returning the incorrect card you were sent.

We are sending you the correct card, and some extra to compensate you for your honesty. We hope you continue to collect Topps Products!

Sincerely

Kathy

Consumer Fulfillment Supervisor

They sent a package in a UPS box with a bubble mailer inside. The bubble envelope had these cards in it:

2011 Topps Platinum Football Jerod May Gold Refractor Patch Auto that I was supposed to receive 09/10 plus two other cards.

2011 Topps Legends Cam Newton Autograph
2010 Topps Triple Threads Sam Bradford/Tim Tebow/
Jimmy Clausen/C.J. Spiller/Ryan Matthews/Jahvid Best
12 Piece GU Booklet Card 13/36



Underneath all the packing peanuts there was a 2011 Bowman Sterling Full Hobby Box. We just finished opening it and did we get a shocker of the lifetime when we opened it.

Biggest Hit:

Cam Newton/Jake Locker/Blaine Gabbert/Mark Ingram/Ryan Williams/Mikel Leshoure Six Autograph
Rookie Booklet Card 08/10.



**Still Goaleless****By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888**

So, the coach was fired, the “sniper” was shipped out but the Habs still have their 7.5 million dollar man! Yes, the Montreal Canadiens are still paying the very productive Scott Gomez a staggering 7.5 million a year to not score...Things are going so well in Montreal in fact that fans have lost all hope to be able to celebrate for truly positive reasons this year and are looking for anything else to celebrate...The result? A brand new website counting down the days until it has been one year since Gomez scored a goal. As I am writing this, there are 7 days left until he reaches this “milestone”...

While the aim of the website was to have a bit of fun and give the fans something to celebrate, it is not a welcomed initiative by all. A journalist from La Presse even went as far as saying that this would be news around the league and that it would make it even more difficult to attract players to Montreal. Personally, I disagree. If a player doesn't want to come to Montreal because the fans will celebrate a scoreless year, I say it's not the type of player they want. If you are a “star” player and a “point getter” you shouldn't even be worried about going without a goal for a year. This treatment wouldn't be given to someone who is meant to be a 4th line grinder or a defenseman, if you're a top tier player, you are meant to deliver top tier results and you cannot expect the faithful fans not to bat an eyelid when you fail to deliver for a whole year.

If you visit the website (<http://www.celebrations-gomez.com/en/>), you will see that there is of course the countdown to the milestone on it, but you can also download everything you need to celebrate the event. Party hats, Pinatas, Pin the tail on the donkey game, you name it, it's there. Thus far, there are 2000 people following the group on Facebook. It will be interesting to see whether some of those people are in attendance at the Bell Centre on February 5th and wearing party hats while waving banners. If such is the case, one can wonder how the other fans will react or even how the Montreal Canadiens organization will react...Should Gomez fail to find the back of the net until then (and let's face it, it's likely that he will) it will be interesting to see how the day unfolds. While everyone will be getting ready to celebrate the champions of Super Bowl 46, some people will have an extra special tailgate.

I will admit that this initiative has made the Canadiens' games interesting to watch once again. While the team has been struggling all year and putting out shameful displays more often than not, now there is at least this “Will he? Won't he?” to every game...I've not experienced this since the Ross and Rachel “Will they? Won't they?” story lines in Friends and it is definitely a breath of fresh air. I know, not everyone agrees with the spirit of the celebration but I don't think you can find another city in the league where fans are passionate enough about their team to find themselves a way to stay on board and talk about it every day regardless of the poor results. If anything, this goes to show that the province of Quebec is as hockey mad as it ever was through the good times and the bad times. The way I see it, that's the message that will come across should this make the news around the league and I sure hope that Gary Bettman will be watching and taking note that Quebec cares about hockey. In fact, this initiative was born in Quebec City so, if the league wants to get fans off of Scott Gomez's back, it could always give Quebec a team back...I seem to recall that there is a team which is constantly losing money and on the brink of being sold while a new arena will shortly be built right here in Quebec...What do you say Mr. Bettman?

BRING BACK THE NORDIQUES!!!!

