

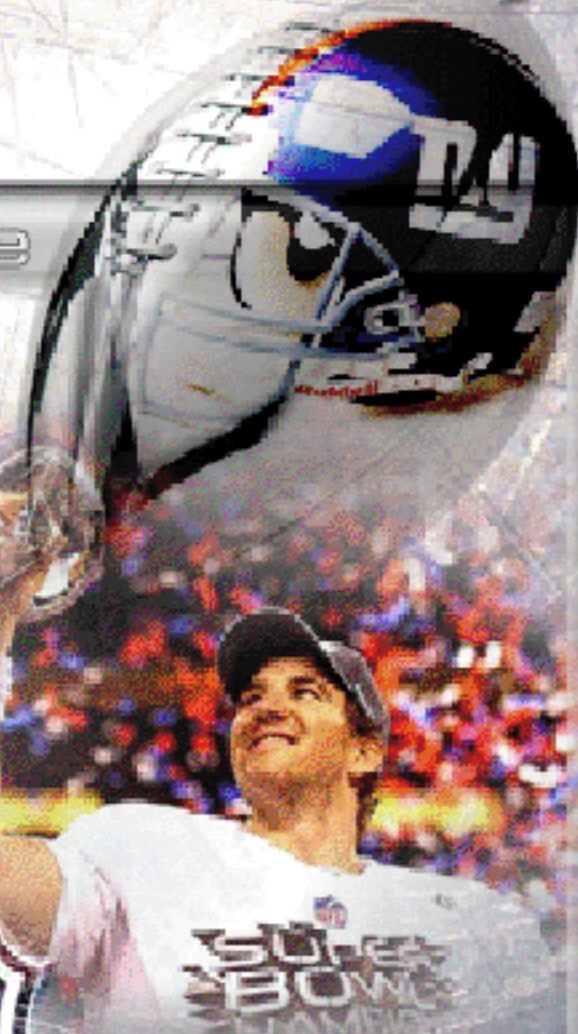
Collector's Corner

SCF

Mar 2012

Feature

NY Giants 2012 Champions



2012 TRADE DEADLINE



Happy 9th Birthday SCF!



Thanks to everyone who either took part or helped planned the numerous SCF's 9th birthday contest!

This site is what it is because of collectors like you! It's hard to believe that it will already be 10 years next March!



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The Team

Editor and Publisher:
Karine Hains

Graphics:

Jared Smith

Writing Team

Richard McAdam

Sean McCafferty

Stephen Duell

Scott Kozlowski

Drew Pelto

Team Contacts

Richard McAdam

Stephen Taylor

Jay Weger

Stephen Duell

J.R. Lebert





Congratulations and Commiserations

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

As a Patriots fan, it is rather hard to write these words, but there is no way around it, the New York Giants were the better team on the day and fully deserved the win. So congratulations to Eli Manning and his crew, hopefully the two teams will meet again soon and the outcome will be different. If that was hard to write, it's nothing compared to what I'm about to say...I am a die-hard Montreal Canadiens fan and have always been so this season, it pains me to see that my beloved Habs are in total meltdown mode...I invite you to read Richard McAdams' featured article from p.5 on the topic as well as my own piece on the topic. However, this one comes with a twist this month; it's in French. The site owner has often tell me that I could write in French if I fancied it and well, since the Habs coach MUST speak French, I guess I MUST write in French too. All jokes aside, I figured why not considering the Canadiens do have a lot of French speaking fans and it makes a nice change to write in my own language.

Once again, the NHL trade deadline came and went and not very much happened unfortunately. I always think it is going to be a very exciting day and more often than not, I end up being disappointed. In fact, this year, the biggest move was made by the L.A. Kings prior to the trade deadline when they carried on rebuilding Philadelphia on the west coast by trading Jack Johnson to the Blue Jackets in return for Jeff Carter. So the Kings now have in their line-up three players who were once considered untouchables in Philly in Jeff Carter, Mike Richards and Simon Gagné. Will the results be positive? Time will tell but at least now the trio is benefiting from stellar goaltending...something that has been lacking in Philly for what seems like forever.

Whether you are happy or not with your team's moves (or lack of), the rosters are now locked for the final push towards a ticket to the spring dance. As I am writing this, Alexander the (once) Great's team is outside looking in just a point out of the 8th place and 3 points behind their division leader, meaning they could finish 8 and just squeeze into the playoffs or, become division leader and climb all the way up to 3rd place...weird playoff system we have there. It looks like the Sidless Pens will manage to feature in the spring tournament, thanks to a fantastic season from Malkin...One has to wonder if he will still play the same way when the captain returns. It's also worth mentioning that the returning Jets are also still in playoff contention and speaking for Canadians everywhere, I do hope they make it. In the West, the race is on as well with L.A., Colorado and Calgary chasing that elusive last playoff spot which currently belongs to Dallas. I am looking forward to seeing if the St. Louis Blue can build on their excellent regular season to make a deep playoff run by ridding their two hot goalies...best of luck to them, we Habs fan can remember Halak bringing us far not so long ago...

Until next month, enjoy this issue and we'll see you again on April 2nd!



Nobody Left to Fire: Why Pierre Gauthier Must Go **By Richard McAdam aka RGM81**

It feels like such a long time ago that the fans of the Montreal Canadiens could feel a genuine and lasting sense of positivity about their beloved club. When the season began many trumpeted that the team was on the cusp of reaching the upper echelons of the National Hockey League. Buoyed by the faulty logic that the team “was just one goal away from knocking off the Bruins” and thus—in Maxwell Smart-esque “missed it by that much” fashion—in a great position to challenge the Bruins for supremacy in the Northeast Division, Canadiens fans entered the 2011-12 campaign with possibly the strongest sense of optimism in years.



The author wishing Scott Gomez well for the season, this past September. Suffice to say, didn't work.

This feeling was not without good reason, and it was not solely the perception of those wearing their bleu-blanc-rouge glasses that the Habs would be a contender in '11-'12. Noted hockey publication The Hockey News predicted that goaltender Carey Price would win the Vezina Trophy as the NHL's top goaltender and pegged the Habs to be a playoff team. There was every reason to believe at the start of the year that Scott Gomez would bounce back from his horrible 2010-11 campaign; that a returning core group comprised of Andrei Markov, Josh Gorges, and Max Pacioretty would boost the team immensely; and that the young players would give a boost to the veter-

ans that propelled everybody on an upward trajectory for the new season.

Things have not worked out that way. First, we learned that Markov's knee was nowhere near ready to begin the season, a saga which continues to frustrate and aggravate fans, the organization, and Markov himself. Second, Gomez has miraculously been even worse than last year, to the point that fans set up a mocking website to celebrate the one-year anniversary since his last goal. Gomez's struggles affected whomever he was paired with, severely limiting the already suspect offensive capability of the Canadiens. Third, the power play, deprived of assistant coach Kirk Muller, struggled horribly and continues to rank at the bottom of the NHL. These factors, combined with Price having more off nights early in the



season than he had in the entire previous campaign, have left the Canadiens in a state of disarray and compelled general manager Pierre Gauthier to make drastic changes to the team's make-up, but with minimal success.

The first major move made by Gauthier to shake up the club was to fire assistant coach Perry Pearn. The move, less than a month into the season, took out the coach that was responsible for the Habs' dismal power play. The PP was so bad that many fans would caustically remark that the Canadiens should decline the penalty, or that the other squad was playing with a 4-on-5 advantage. The Habs gave up 5 short-handed goals early in the season, which had them at worst in the NHL for some time, while the offence ranked near the bottom of the League in power play efficiency. Was Pearn really the problem, or was he simply made a scapegoat? His duties also included the penalty killing unit, which at one point in the campaign killed off over 30 consecutive penalties, no small feat given that the Canadiens are in the top-ten most penalized teams. Whatever the case may be, Pearn's firing did spark the club, as they went on a four-game winning streak during which the man advantage did show some signs of life.

Shortly after that initial momentum boost, however, the team fell back into its struggles and head coach Jacques Martin came increasingly under fire for his seeming inability to get his team prepared to play a full 60 minutes. The team would routinely go several minutes into the game without registering a shot on goal, then endure similar stretches of offensive ineptitude, and of course there were the blown leads.

The Canadiens would find a way to build up a two-goal lead over an opponent, and then they would regress into Martin's defensive style of hockey. There were few odd-man rushes, dazzling displays of dynamism, or shots on goal once the team took the lead. All you have to do is look at the box score to see the disparity in the team's shots on goal totals (and the shots allowed) as the game wore on and Martin took his foot off the pedal. As a consequence, the opportunities for the opposing team increased as they were allowed to press the advantage to get back into the team, resulting in the Habs surrendering an astounding number of third-period leads and losing games in overtime or, worse, regulation.



With the coach now feeling the pressure, Gauthier once again intervened to remedy the situation. As Andrei Markov's recovery process took a major backwards step, requiring another surgery for the blueliner, Gauthier traded veteran defenceman and impending UFA Jaroslav Spacek to the Carolina Hurricanes for Tomas Kaberle. The move, so the rationale went, would provide stability on the back end while giving another impetus to the moribund power play. Many fans were livid at the notion of taking on another big-dollar contract for a player



that was severely under-performing. It was a great irony that only four days prior to the December 9th trade, Montreal Gazette writer Dave Stubbs wrote (in the context of the Markov re-signing over the summer) the following about Kaberle: "If you want to condemn a GM for signing a veteran defenceman to a long-term deal, how about Carolina's Jim Rutherford, who signed the wretched Tomas Kaberle to a three-year deal? Kaberle was nothing but excess baggage for the Bruins during their Stanley Cup run last spring, and he's been less than that for Carolina." Though he has a number of second assists, the fans' consensus has proven justified as Kaberle has proven to be a disaster for the Habs.

As such, on December 17th Gauthier relieved Martin of his head coaching duties. He touched off a language police imbroglio by appointing unilingual Anglophone assistant Randy Cunneyworth as the interim head coach for the rest of the season. The timing was strange, coming on the morning of a game and thus giving Cunneyworth very little time to implement any potential new strategies and tactics to lift the struggling Habs from their doldrums. Indeed, handing over the reins at a time when the Habs were about to embark on a brutal stretch of four road games in six nights was almost ensuring that the new coach would have few opportunities to conduct full practices, adjust line combinations, or instill different work ethics in his players. While many agreed that Martin had to go, doing so at such a critical juncture, with the season and the prospects of the playoffs literally hanging in the balance, was a move that reeked of panic and desperation by a general manager that it now appeared was clinging to his job.

If Habs fans thought that the timing of the Martin firing was strange, they were in for a tremendous shock on January 14th, 2012. Halfway through the second period of a game, the commentary crew suddenly noticed that disgruntled sniper Mike Cammalleri had disappeared from the bench. He was not injured, there was no talk of an equipment problem, he was just gone. Minutes later we learned that Cammalleri was in a taxi cab back to the hotel because he had been traded to the Calgary Flames. It stunned and surprised just about everybody. Yes Cammalleri had said some inflammatory things about the team having a "loser's mentality" to the press, but to trade a player during the game?! It was unfathomable. Though the Habs got a decent return in Rene Bourque and a 2nd round pick, it mean the sudden and bizarre end to a popular player's tenure with the Habs. Gauthier said that he'd been planning to trade Cammalleri for weeks, but at least one NHL GM commented to the press that he wished he knew the former Habs #13 was available.

What does all of this mean? It means that there was some serious miscalculating made by the Canadiens at the organizational level going into this season. It's one thing for fans to cling to false concepts such as "we were a goal away from knocking off the eventual champs" or "if we had our full and healthy roster..." but something else entirely to do so if you are the actual general manager of the club. The Canadiens only made two significant roster moves last summer: signing Erik Cole and backup goaltender Peter Budaj. There have been the in-season adjustments previously discussed, but clearly Gauthier believed that the squad he had last season was just about good enough to contend for the Stanley Cup. That has clearly not been the case.



Carey Price played a lot of hockey last year, easily the most he has played since the 2006-07 year when he played 52 regular season and playoff games for the Tri-City Americans, 6 games leading Team Canada to gold at the World Juniors, and then 24 more regular season and playoff games for the Hamilton Bulldogs en route to the Calder Cup. While he would never admit fatigue after playing a club record 72 regular season and 7 playoffs games, there is a rather proven recipe for NHL goalies that the ideal number of starts for a number one goalie falls in the range of 60-65 games. Through 63 games Price has appeared in 54 already, and the mental and physical fatigue that comes with so many frustrating losses is beginning to show. It is a coach's decision how often to play his number one goalie, but in signing Budaj the organization essentially consigned Price the overwhelming majority of the starts right from the get-go. Budaj's 2-6-1 record in his limited action has not aided the team, and further ensures that the workload will fall to Price and further wear him out over the rest of the season, however long that may be. The summer of 2011 had a respectable number of available goaltenders that could have been capable of playing 15-20 games, but for whatever reason the decision was made to go with Budaj and give him the best seat in the house every night to watch the Montreal Canadiens and Carey Price play hockey.



The one good off-season signing in Montreal last summer.

Signing Erik Cole has, to this point, been one of the best moves of Gauthier's tenure as the Habs' GM. Cole has been a consistent producer for the team, one of only a handful of players up front about whom such a thing can be said. While bringing in Cole was the team's marquee splash, it was also the only splash of real significance for the on-ice product. The Canadiens remain a team very close to the salary cap, and thus their ability to make major personnel moves is severely restricted. The albatross that is the Scott Gomez contract should have been addressed this past summer, either via a trade to a cap floor team or a demotion to Hamilton. I do not say this to disrespect Gomez, an

honest player that works hard and made serious efforts to bounce back from his atrocious 2010-11 season, but in a salary cap world a contract that eats over 10% of the team's available cap space must provide appropriate dividends. Even when he was producing, Gomez's numbers would at best equal that of a \$4M player. The funds being eaten by his contract mean that other players could not be re-



signed, and may yet affect the Canadiens' ability to re-sign other valuable contributors to the team in the coming years. While not game-breakers, good teammates like Jeff Halpern and Roman Hamrlik were unceremoniously shown the door after last season ended. Re-assigning Gomez would have freed up sufficient cap space to possibly pursue a legitimate #1 centre such as Brad Richards, or even secondary UFA's like Simon Gagne or Thomas Fleischmann. The sole adjustment of bringing in Cole to the top six means that the 23rd-ranked offence in Montreal was unlikely to be significantly bolstered, and indeed it has not.

The lack of personnel movement for the forwards, however, ranks as a distant second place in terms of grand mistake compared to the choices that were made for the Canadiens' defence corps. James Wisniewski was traded days before July 1st for a draft pick – Gauthier did not even make an inquiry with "The Wiz's" agent to see what it would take to bring the popular player back into the fold. While the Canadiens' cap situation would certainly not have allowed Montreal to match the 6-year, \$33M contract that the Blue Jackets offered Wisniewski, they could have at least inquired at some point to see what would have been an acceptable offer to retain his talents in Montreal. Further, Gauthier took a huge gamble on Andrei Markov that has absolutely not paid off one iota. It was a great gesture of

respect to offer Markov a 3-year deal for the same \$5.75M per season he made prior to his knee injury, but one that was utterly foolish. To give a player that has missed the great majority of the past two seasons top dollars and big term is a tremendous risk; even if Markov had rejoined the Canadiens from the start of the season and been the same Andrei Markov that was so dominant a fixture on the blue line, it is debatable whether the move was smart in the long term given his injury history and the fact that he is on the wrong side of 30 years old. Giving Markov that three-year deal while only offering a single year to Josh Gorges was an injurious move to the team's future. Gorges has clearly been better than ever this season, as not only is he the same highly-dependable defensive defenceman he has always been, his newly-recon



The Architect of the Disastrous 2011-12 Campaign will soon see its dissolution.



structed knee has given him greater ability to skate the puck out of the Habs' own zone and join the rush. While Gorges was re-signed to a 6-year contract extension on January 1st, his agent was very forthright when he said this deal would have cost much less in average annual salary had it been made the previous summer. Perhaps such a thing is a faux pas to admit publicly but it is does not make it less true.



So in summary, Gauthier in the past year has made two good moves (Cole's signing and the Gorges long-term extension) and at least three moves that are fire-able offences: the Markov contract, retaining Scott Gomez, and trading for Tomas Kaberle. One can debate whether the Budaj signing also meets that standard. It is bizarre that the Canadiens ownership has not acted sooner to remove this problem. The Canadiens are floundering both on and off the ice, putting out a deplorable product on a nightly basis that is rivalled only by the ineptitude displayed by the front office. The team has lost 22 games in which they have had a lead

– that speaks to the coaching. It is a problem that started under Martin and has continued under Cunneyworth. The role of the general manager is to ensure that the coach has the on-ice talent to win hockey games on a consistent basis.

And so here we are, just hours before the NHL trade deadline. The Canadiens are in last place in the Eastern Conference and the only thing they are in contention for is a lottery pick at the draft. Hal Gill has already been traded. He is expected to be the first of many. What is so disconcerting is that the architect of all of this mess we see before us (including the Gomez trade, as Gauthier was the director of professional scouting at the time and advised Gainey to make the deal) is now the person we expect to see dismantle it in such a fashion that the Canadiens can be competitive in 2012-13 and beyond. Owner and president Geoff Molson is reportedly more involved in the day-to-day operations of the club at this point, but Gauthier nonetheless is the man with his finger on the trigger. The rumour mill has it that Gauthier will be relieved of his duties at the end of the season (which will be on April 7th when the final horn sounds against the Maple Leafs) – it is the only logical maneuver that Molson can undertake at this point. There is simply nobody left to fire.



Release Dates

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

Basketball

Panini Hoops 03/07/12

Panini Preferred 03/21/12

Football

Panini Totally Certified Football 03/07/12

Panini Prime Signatures 03/21/12

Panini National Treasures 03/28/12

Leaf Metal 03/28/12

Hockey

Upper Deck Series 2 03/06/12

Panini Elite 03/12/12

Upper Deck SPx 03/21/12

Upper Deck SP Game Used 03/21/12

Panini Contenders 03/28/12

ITG Captain C - laate March

Baseball

Panini Prime Cuts 03/21/12





Product Review: 2011 Panini Limited Football

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Description

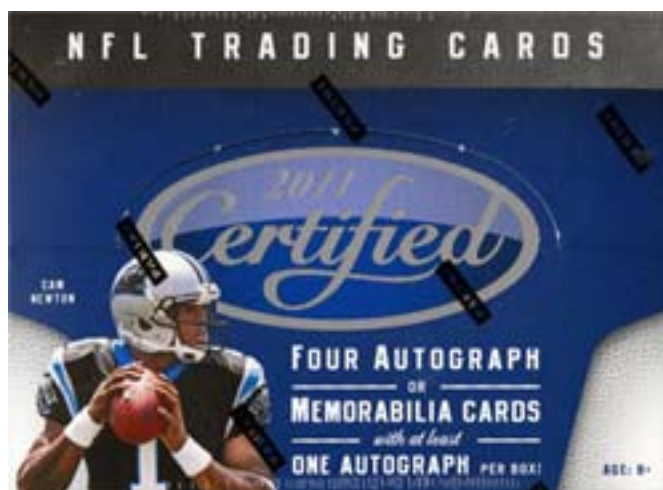
10 packs per box

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$94.99-\$109.99

Box Break

- 4 Autographs/Material Cards (at least one autograph)
- 1 Mirror Parallel (Red, Blue, Gold, Emerald or Black seq. #ed to 250 or less)
- 2 New Generation Rookies, seq. #ed to 999 or less
- 1 Insert (Certified Potential or Gold Team, seq. #ed to 999 or less)
- 1 Other Parallel/Insert/New Generation Rookie



Case Break (24-box case)

Look for six or more of the following autographs Aaron Rodgers, Adrian Peterson, Drew Brees, Peyton Manning, John Elway, Tony Romo, Emmitt Smith, Tom Brady, Bart Starr, Michael Vick, Philip Rivers, Dan Marino, Cam Newton, Jerry Rice, A.J. Green, Joe Namath, Julio Jones, Barry Sanders, Jake Locker, Brett Favre, Blaine Gabbert, Gale Sayers, Christian Ponder, John Elway, Jonathan Baldwin, Jim Brown, Mark Ingram, Joe Montana, Andy Dalton, Deion Sanders, Colin Kaepernick, Marshall Faulk, Ryan Williams, Mikel LeShoure or On-Card Signature.

What We Pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKujI...3&feature=plcp>

Base - 38/150 (25.3%)

Rookies /999 (3) - Gabe Carimi, Nathan Enderle, Rodney Hudson

Mirror Red /250 (2) - Peyton Hillis, Stephen Tulloch

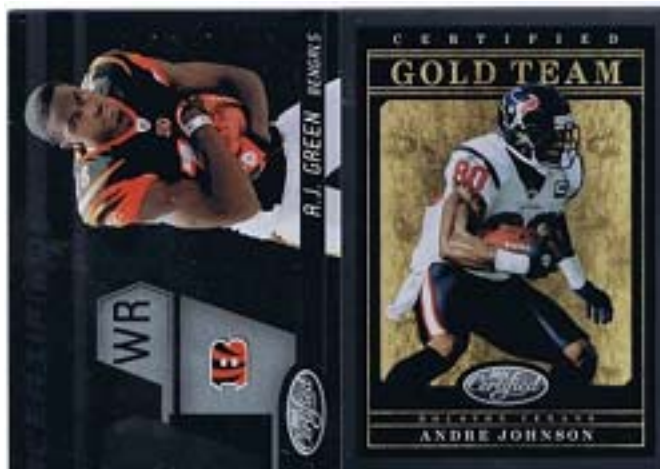
Mirror Blue /100 (4) - Kevin Walter, Jerod Mayo, Pierre Thomas, James Laurinaitis

Mirror Gold /25 (1) - LaGarrette Blount



Certified Potential /999 (1) - A.J. Green

Gold Team /999 (1) - Andre Johnson



Fabric Of The Game DeMarco
Murray Jersey /250





Fabric Of The Game Jersey Number
Autographs Patrick Willis Jersey/Auto /25



Freshman Fabric Mirror Blue
Randall Cobb Jersey /50



Shirt Off My Back Delone Carter Jersey /250



Final Ratings

Base - 4/5
Design - 4/5
Fun - 4/5
Value - 4.25/5
Rebuy - 4.5/5
Total - 20.75/25 (83%)

Pros:

- All inserts and parallels are numbered
- Possible hot boxes (yields more "hits")
- Fabric Of The Game is back for another year
- Oversized swatches (Freshman Fabrics)

Cons:

- Merging last years Certified Platinum into the base design (too busy)
- Sticker Autos
- Heavy on parallels, low on inserts
- Multiple boxes to complete base set



Product Review: 2011-2012 ITG Heroes and Prospect Hockey **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.

Product Information

18 packs per box

9 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online):

\$74.99 - \$89.99

<http://www.itgtradingcards.com/produ...roes-prospects>

In The Game unveiled Heroes and Prospects during the 2004-05 season and it has become an annual hobby tradition that is set to enter its eighth straight year in 2011-12.

Featuring the brightest prospects from the AHL and CHL along with legends from hockey's past and present, In The Game is in the process of putting together what we hope will be another winner!



This year, Heroes and Prospect will once again have a loaded base set and it is made up of 200 cards. It all begins with the Heroes subset that includes legends like Red Kelly, Mike Gartner and Tony Amonte and there are also be several International Prospects in the lineup as well. Many drafted prospects from the OHL, QMJHL and WHL are part of the CHL subset along with many youngsters who have a shot at being selected in the 2012 NHL Entry Draft. On the AHL side, look for players who were among the league's top freshmen in 2010-11 like Luke Adam, Nazem Kadri and Robin Lehner.

For the third year in a row, Heroes and Prospects will also include AHL and CHL rookies as part of their base set. Look for hot young CHL talents like Max Domi, Mikhail Grigorenko and Curtis Lazar along with first-year pros like Carter Ashton, Zack Kassian and Andy Miele that are tearing up the AHL. Returning to to the base set in 2011-12 are the AHL and CHL Grads which looks back on many of today's hottest stars during their early days in the sport. Rounding out the base set are special Tribute cards which recognize the accomplishments of five players that the game has lost in recent years.



Autographs have been a staple of Heroes and Prospects since the start and this season's release is loaded up with signatures from many players who are sure to make an impact over the next few years. Look for some awesome certified signatures from promising talents like Griffin Reinhart and Sean Couturier in addition to shortprinted autographs from the Heroes and many CHL and AHL Grads. In The Game is also pleased to offer signatures from three of the players from the Tribute subset and they are sure to be cherished collectibles.

The lineup of Game-Used Memorabilia cards for this season is still in the development stages, but that doesn't mean that we can't leak a few details at this time. As always, look for Game-Used Jersey, Number and Emblem cards along with Autograph versions plus collector favorites like the ever-popular Complete Logo, SUBWAY Super Series and CHL Top Prospects Game sets.



Non-memorabilia inserts will also be a big part of this year's release and you can count on the annual Calder Cup and Memorial Cup Champions in addition to some new concepts that are sure to turn some heads.

What We Pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0-7QeLSNiE>

Base - 140/200

He Shoots, He Scores Points (16) - Not Scanned
Calder Cup Champions (1)
Family Ties (1)





Luca Ciampini Autograph



Rickard Rakell Autograph



Dual Jersey Silver Ryan Ellis/Blake Geoffrion
Dual Jersey (p.r. not yet announced)



Top Prospects Silver Christopher Gibson
2-color Jumbo Patch (p.r. 80)



Final Ratings

Base - 4.5/5
Design - 5/5
Fun - 3.5/5
Value - 4/5
Rebuy - 4.5/5
Overall - 21.5/25 (86%)

Pros:

Nice change in base design
Jumbo memorabilia swatches
Possibility of completing the base set in two boxes



Continuation of He Shoots, He Scores program

Cons:

Sticker autos

2/3 of packs with nothing but base takes away some of the excitement

Heroes And Prospects is one of the staple product in the In The Game family, along with Between The Pipes and Ultimate Memorabilia. ITG does not disappoint with this year's release. Encompassing 200 subjects, which a huge emphasis on prospects, can be a daunting task and ITG ties it all together nicely. And in a huge display of classiness and pure tastefulness, the five Tribute cards at the end of the set are wonderful. Kudos to ITG on using this way to honor these young men.

While opening the packs can get boring and tedious at times, Heroes And Prospects is worth taking the chance on. The jumbo swatches are truly eye catching, especially if they are multi-colored. Plus, there is a low yield of inserts, so it makes the chase worthwhile and helps to maintain value. And of course, don't miss out on the He Shoots, He Scores program.

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.

Heroes And Prospects Update Set Offer:

Set will include 50 additional players and 1 memorabilia or autograph card

Cost is \$39.95 (includes S/H)

If you include 10 H&P wrappers with your order, cost will be \$34.95 (includes S/H)

Visit www.itgtradingcards.com for ordering information





Product Review: 2012 Topps Baseball Series 1

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Description

36 packs per box

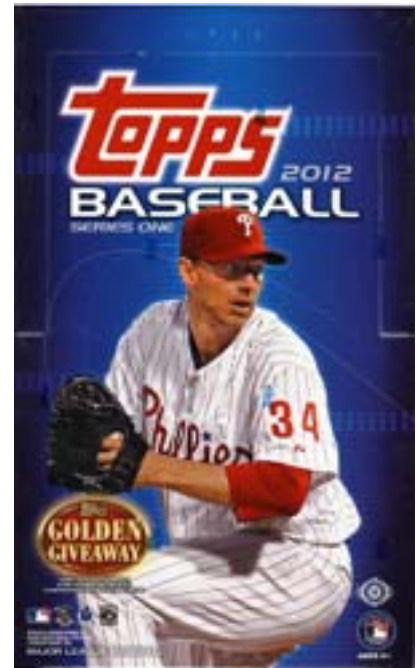
10 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$57.99 - \$69.99

Product Highlights

Base Cards

The 330-card base set includes 265 Veterans, 30 Rookies, 10 League Leaders, the 2 Cy Young Award Winners, the 2 League MVPs, the 2 Rookies of the Year, 5 Record Breakers for the 2011 season, 4 World Series Highlights cards, and 10 cards recognizing the Active Leaders in 10 categories.



Parallel Cards

- Black Parallel (330): Black-bordered cards sequentially numbered to 61. HOBBY & HTA ONLY
- Platinum Parallel (330): Platinum-bordered cards. ONE OF ONE!
- Golden Moments Parallel (330): A special parallel on shimmering gold foil. Inserted 1:4.
- Wood Parallel (330): The base cards printed on wood stock. ONE OF ONE!
- Base Card Printing Plates (1,320): All 330 base cards will have their 4 printing inserted in the product. ONE OF ONE! These will be plates of card fronts only. HOBBY & HTA ONLY
- Gold Silk Collection (100): Framed mini silk cards printed on special gold silk. Sequentially numbered to 50. HOBBY & HTA ONLY

What we Pulled

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vmylblpfz14>





Dupes - 0

SP - 0

Golden Giveaway Codes - 6 (not scanned)

Gold Sparkle (9)

1987 Minis (9)

Classic Walk-Offs (4)

Gold Futures (6)

Gold Standard (6)

Golden Greats (9)

Golden Moments (9)

Prime 9 Home Run Legends Redemptions (2)

Timeless Talents (6)



Golden Moments Jonathan Lucroy Jersey



Final Ratings

Base - 4.5/5

Design - 4/5

Fun - 3.5/5

Value - 4/5



Rebuy - 5/5
Overall - 21/25 (84%)

Pros:

Nice assortment of inserts
Almost a complete base set
Entertaining SPs to chase
Golden Giveaway Promotion
Gold Rush Wrapper Redemption Program

Cons:

Gold cards are unnumbered
Tedious to rip through 36 packs
1 Hit per box

NPN Information:

Hand print name and address on a 3x5 index card and send in a #10 envelope (standard PWE) to

NPN Topps BB Series 1
PO Box 763
Pittston, PA 18640

Limit 1 request per household

Postmarked by 11/14/12
Received by 11/21/12

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

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: Press Pass Total Memorabilia

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

Product Details

5 packs per box

9 cards per pack

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

EVERY 9-CARD PACK includes at least:

- * (1) NUMBERED AUTOGRAPHED RISING STARS MEMORABILIA CARD!
- * OR (1) NUMBERED AUTHENTIC MEMORABILIA CARD!
- * OR (1) NUMBERED BOOK CARD featuring an Authentic Autograph & Race-Used Memorabilia!

EACH 10-BOX 1/2 CASE contains:

- * At least (1) NUMBERED BOOK CARD featuring an AUTOGRAPH & AUTHENTIC MEMORABILIA!
- * PLUS at least (4) RISING STARS AUTOGRAPHED MEMORABILIA CARDS!



What we Pulled

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWL6KwXrv_I

Card #0 Tony Stewart

Base - 24/50





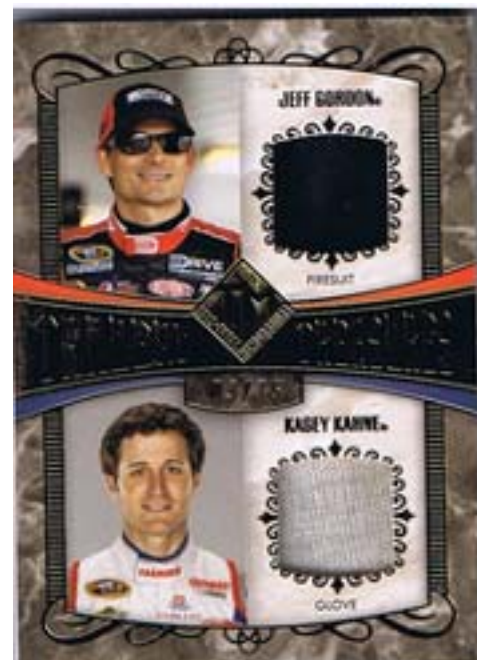
Memory Lane (5)

Rising Stars (5)

Tandem Treasures Amber Cope 3-color
Glove/Angela Cope 1-color Glove /75



Total Memorabilia Trevor Bayne Firesuit



mbrose



/Sheet Metal/Tire /99



2-color Firesuit/Tire w/ paint mark
/Sheet Metal/ Heat Shield /25



Total Memorabilia Holo Jeff Gordon 3-color Sheet Metal /10



Final Ratings

Base - 4.5/5
Design - 5/5
Fun - 3.5/5
Value - 4/5
Rebuy - 4.5/5
Overall - 21.25/25 (85%)

Pros:

Sleek design



Use of Heat Shield swatches (something different)
Bob Osbourne getting some recognition
Packaging (nice and concise)

Cons:

Packaging (mini boxes do not slide open easily)
Cards are packed in same order (5 base, hit, 2 inserts, parallel) in every pack
Team bags to house packs

Total Memorabilia is a brand new product from Press Pass. It replaces the Wheels Element line that had some popularity over the last couple of years. This release delivers in a big way from a great design layout to a myriad of memorabilia swatches. The memorabilia pieces can range from single to quad swatches. Toss in the possibility of booklet and you this is a product to check out. While some may turn their nose at the possibility of getting some subjects, such as the Rising Star Autographs, Total Memorabilia strives to maintain a focus on the top tier drivers. Whether you grab singles, a pack or a box, few will be disappointed.

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.





Assez difficile comme année...
By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

Bon an mal an, j'ai toujours été une fan du CH. Même lors de mes années en Angleterre, je regardais les matchs bien qu'ils commencent à minuit et se terminent à 3 heures du matin. Ça ne me dérangeais même pas d'avoir l'air d'un zombie à 9h00 le lendemain matin au travail mais ce soir, je souffre d'un mal bien pire...En effet, je n'ai pas réussi à regarder le match du CH au complet! Tout un choc pour moi! J'aime supporter mon équipe mais le match de ce soir était complètement insupportable. Aucun effort, aucune émotion, un "spectacle" terne et sans vie...je l'avoue, je me suis surprise à regarder un film au lieu de la partie.

Il faut dire que nous ne l'avons pas facile cette année, confortablement installé au 15e rang de l'association de l'Est, les Canadiens pataugent dans un marasme total et comble de tout, ils semblent s'y plaire. En fait, nous n'avons vraiment pas eu beaucoup de raison de nous réjouir cette année; le fait que Gomez ait finalement compté a probablement été notre plus grand fait saillant...bon d'accord j'exagère mais vous voyez ce que je veux dire. Je me dis quand même que je devrais essayer de nous remonter le moral en trouvant des points positifs:

1. La signature d'Erik Cole: Oui, il a eu un départ laborieux mais une fois lancé, rien ne peut l'arrêter (oufff je l'avoue ça fait générique du Petit Castor mais bon).
2. Le retour de Max Pacioretty: Après l'incident Chara, on se demandait s'il allait un jour remarché et aujourd'hui, il tire définitivement son épingle du jeu sur le meilleur trio du Canadien
3. L'éclosion de David Desharnais: Qu'on le veuille ou non, l'attaquant format miniature a mérité sa place de premier centre du Canadien. Finalement un Québécois avec de la détermination, du cœur au ventre et la fierté de porter la Sainte-Flanelle qui jadis caractérisait tous les joueurs du Bleu, Blanc, Rouge.
4. Le congédiement de Jacques Martin: D'accord, ça ne va pas mieux depuis l'arrivée de Cunneyworth en poste mais le fait est qu'il n'est que la solution intérimaire et que l'organisation lui a carrément tiré dans le pied en le disant haut et fort. Quoi qu'il arrive l'an prochain, le nouvel entraîneur ne pourra pas préconiser un style plus ennuyeux que l'évangile selon Jacques.
5. Le repêchage: Soyons réaliste, nos espoirs de séries ont été anéantis et si nous continuons de jouer comme nous l'avons fait ce soir, nous pourrions possiblement avoir un excellent choix au repêchage...Est-ce que quelqu'un dirait vraiment non au jeune attaquant russe des Rempart Grigorenko?

En bref, ce soir, j'ai fait le deuil de notre saison mais je me console en me disant que nous avons vu de belles choses et que cette saison en dents de scie nous permettra peut-être de rebondir qui sait...Nous reste qu'à espérer que Gauthier ne fasse pas d'échange désastreux d'ici la fin de la période de transaction. Personnellement, les seuls joueurs que je considère intouchables sont Price, Subban, Desharnais, Cole et Pacioretty...On dira ce qu'on voudra de PK et de son comportement, j'aime bien son énergie.



Mes Oscars de la Ligue Nationale **By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888**

En ce dimanche des oscars, je me suis dit qu'on pourrait se faire un petit gala version LNH. Quels sont mes catégories? Et bien voici:

- meilleure équipe (meilleur film)
- meilleur joueur dans un rôle de leader (meilleur acteur dans un rôle principal)
- meilleur joueur de soutien (meilleur acteur dans un rôle de soutien)
- meilleur initiative familiale (meilleur film animé)
- meilleur nouvel uniforme (meilleurs costumes)
- meilleur DG (meilleur réalisateur)

Commençons par le meilleur DG. Mes nominés?

Paul Holmgren, Philadelphie: Il n'a pas hésité à misé sur Claude Giroux en se départissant de Jeff Carter et de Mike Richards et il a de plus signé Jaromir Jagr alors que nombre de connaisseur le croyait fini. Bien sûr le problème des gardiens demeure toujours dans la ville de l'amour fraternelle mais bon, personne n'est parfait.

Glen Sather, Rangers: Et oui...les signatures de Gaborik et de Richards semblent avoir porté fruits. Les Rangers ont présentement 84 points et connaissent une très bonne saison. On remarque aussi que la jeune défense des Rangers est très intéressante Marc Staal, Michael Del Zotto et Ryan McDonagh en étant les pierres angulaires. Ce dernier ayant été acquis en retour de notre bon ami Scott Gomez faut-il le rappeler?

Peter Chiarelli, Bruins: JE DÉTESTE les Bruins mais je suis obligé d'avouer que leur état major se tire très bien d'affaire et ce, depuis plusieurs saisons. Aller chercher Rask pour Raycroft était pour le moins un coup de génie. Envoyé Kessel à Toronto pour ce qui se résume essentiellement à Tyler Séguin était un aussi bon coup jusqu'à maintenant et donner un contrat à long terme à Tim Thomas fut aussi une excellente décision.

Gagnant: Peter Chiarelli, Boston.

Meilleur nouvel uniforme. Les nominés:

Washington Alternate: J'adore le look retro de cet uniforme, ça nous ramène aux beaux jours de Dale Hunter quand il comptait pour les Caps au lieu d'essayer de les ressusciter...

Winnipeg Jets: Le nouveau logo n'a pas fait l'unanimité mais pour moi, c'est le parfait mélange de vieux et de neuf.



Tampa Bay Lightning: Oui, je l'avoue, moi je l'aime leur nouvel uniforme tout bleu. Je suis probablement une des seules heheh.

Gagnant: Winnipeg Jets, peut-être un vote presque forcé ici puisque je suis extrêmement contente de les revoir dans la LNH. En passant, le PIRE uniforme est sans aucune compétition celui des Islanders...on dirait une équipe de hockey qui a décidé de porter un uniforme de Basketball...

Meilleur initiative familiale

Ici, je n'ai pas de nominée mais une organisation gagnante qui à fait un geste incroyable pour un de ses fans. Pour les collectionneurs de cartes de hockey, vous connaissez peut-être www.sportscardforum.com? Et bien un membre sur ce site est un grand fan des Kings de Los Angeles et amène son fils à de nombreuses parties afin d'avoir des autographes, à tel point que les joueurs et l'organisation le connaisse. Cette année, lorsque son deuxième fils est né de façon prématuré, les Kings ont décidé de faire plaisir à la famille pour leur remonter le moral pendant ce passage difficile. Pour plus de détails et photos, voir le lien suivant: "<http://www.sportscardforum.com/showthread.php?t=1515271> "



Meilleur joueur de soutien:

Milan Michalek, Ottawa: Il connaît une excellente saison et peu nombreux sont ceux qui l'avait vu venir celle-là! Sa contribution offensive permet au Sens de se trouver où ils se trouvent présentement et de ne plus avoir à compter seulement sur Spezza et Alfredson.



Teemu Selanne, Anaheim: À son âge, Teemu ne devrait plus être la tête d'affiche de l'équipe, pas avec des joueurs comme Corey Perry et Ryan Getzlaf dans l'alignement et pourtant...Selanne est présentement le meilleur compteur des Ducks croyez le ou non...Et quel exemple pour les jeunes joueurs!

Jordan Staal, Pittsburgh: D'accord, il n'était pas là pour une grande partie de la saison et ses stats le reflète mais il demeure un joueur important à Pittsburgh, un rouage clé pour l'organisation qui sait prendre plus de place lorsque place il y à...

Gagnant: Teemu Selanne.

Meilleur Joueur dans un rôle de leader:

Henrik Lundqvist, Rangers: King Henrik se tappe une autre formidable saison. Il est un roc dans le but pour son équipe et leur donne une chance de gagner à chaque match sans exception. Un pourcentage d'efficacité de .940, une moyenne de but accordée de 1.78 avec un maigre total de 81 buts accordés font en sorte que Lundqvist est le coeur des Blue Shirts cette année.

Claude Giroux, Flyers: Le jeune joueur des Flyers a rempli toutes les attentes de l'état-major des Flyers qui avait misé gros sur lui en échangeant Carter et Richards. Il est dans la course au trophée Art Ross et son absence était quasi intolérable pour les Flyers lorsqu'il a souffert une commotion.

Evgeni Malkin, Penguins: Le deuxième centre des Penguins est vraiment à son meilleur lorsqu'il n'est pas dans l'ombre de Sid the Kid. Il est présentement le meilleur marqueur de la ligue et a démontré tout son talent lorsqu'il a littéralement disséqué la défense du Lightning hier soir de la même façon que Lemieux l'avait fait avec les North Stars il y a déjà plusieurs années. Sans Crosby, les Penguins auraient pu connaître une saison des plus difficiles mais heureusement, Malkin a pris la relève et les Pens se dirigent à grands pas vers les séries.
youtube:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0Dyw_79f4k

Gagnant: Evgeni Malkin

Meilleur équipe:

Canucks de Vancouver: Et oui, ils sont en tête! Après un début de saison difficile, Luongo s'est remplacé et ils misent maintenant sur deux très bons gardiens avec Scheinder et Roberto. Les Sedins tronnent encore très haut au classement des pointeurs. Reste à voir s'ils sauront finalement rappatrié la Coupe au Canada cette année.

Rangers de New York: Détenteur du premier rang dans l'Est, les Rangers connaissent une excellent saison. Le leadership de Calahan et la justesse de sa nomination à titre de capitaine ne font plus aucun doute, Lundqvist est égal à lui-même et la jeune brigade défensive en ébloui plus d'un!



Red Wings de Détroit: Avec Détroit, c'est la même histoire à chaque année mais ça reste tout de même épatant. Cette année Jimmy Howard a démontré qu'il pouvait être le gardien numéro 1 de l'organisation. Datsyuk et Zetterberg sont toujours aussi efficace et que dire du capitaine Niklas Lidstrom...c'est à se demander s'il vieilli...

Gagnant:Red Wings de Détroit.

Et voilà, ça fait le tour pour moi. Qu'en pensez-vous? Qui serait vos gagnant?





Rinkside

By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

By the time you read this, the NHL Trade Deadline will have come and gone. Many players will have changed teams in exchange for picks and prospects, hoping for that one magical playoff run and championship glory. The trade deadline has a huge impact on both the NHL and on the hobby, reconfiguring the landscape of both simultaneously. Those players who have gone from non-contenders overnight have a chance to compete for a Stanley Cup, and the increased visibility means that they will attract new collectors. Someone that was once just a hobby semi-star or common can overnight become a sensation in their new environment.



We saw this earlier in February when the Montreal Canadiens acquired Blake Geoffrion from the Nashville Predators in exchange for Hal Gill. Geoffrion's name carries with it a tremendous legacy: he is the grandson of Canadiens' Hall of Famer "Boom Boom" Geoffrion and the great-grandson of Howie Morenz. Geoffrion's Twitter followers exploded in number after the trade, with many fans welcoming him to Montreal. His card values jumped substantially – his Panini Certified Mirror Gold rookie parallel #d /25 was selling for \$15 in January; in the days after the trade, similar copies of the card were selling for \$35 on eBay. The Canadiens effect has struck early with this young prospect before he has even played a single game in a Habs uniform. One can only hope that Upper Deck and Panini are scrambling to get photos and event jerseys of Geoffrion in Montreal colours for the late-season product releases.

The Geoffrion example is just one of many big-name moves to transpire at the trade deadline in recent years. Marian Hossa's departure from Atlanta in 2008 to join the Pittsburgh Penguins was met with immediate response from collectors. Though the Penguins came up a bit short at the end of their march to the Cup that year, the short-term boost to Hossa's cards was very notable. Then he moved to Detroit. And then Chicago. But I digress. The deadline can be a very stressful time for collectors who don't collect superstars but do have a focus on those important cogs in the wheel that give a team that extra bit of moxy for a playoffs run. If your guy is an impending UFA on a non-contending team, you may soon face a hard decision as to whether or not to continue pursuing that player's cards once he changes addresses. One can only imagine how much a Dominic Moore fan and collector suffers, now that he has been traded again and is on his ninth NHL club. Recently on the Hockey Card Talk Forum a collector posted a mockup of a Crown Royale Scratching The Surface autograph of oft-traded Mike Sillinger that had all of the team logos on it of teams that Sillinger had played for in his career, and it gives you an idea of just how much journey goes into a journeyman player.



While the trade deadline is itself something of an unofficial holiday for many hockey fans that can't bear to be chained to their office desk and miss on the breaking news, it is also an important landmark on the NHL season as a whole. It signifies the beginning of the home stretch to the playoffs, as rosters are finalized and the team you have at 3:01pm EST on February 27th will be the one that you rise and fall with for the remainder of the season. You always hope that the tweaks and acquisitions landed will be the ones that put your team over the top, pushing from a contender to a favourite to win the Stanley Cup. Will there be that one deal that can do that for a club this year? We will find out in the weeks ahead as the playoffs inch ever closer.

Of course, the trade deadline is not so enjoyable for all teams. While the buyers on deadline day get excited about their new faces and playoff fortunes, for the sellers the trade deadline is somewhat akin to raising the white flag on the season. When central pieces of the team are traded away for picks and prospects, it is a signal that there are better days ahead, but they will not be coming during this season. While it is nice to see young players get an opportunity to strut their stuff for next season, it just does not have the same great feeling as being involved in a playoff race and competing for anything more than pride. Speaking as a Montreal Canadiens fan, this has been a hard season, and seeing good guys like Hal Gill and others shipped to contending teams is a brutal reality check that the team this year just did not have what it takes. You will recall that earlier in the season I wrote an article about the optimism I and many others felt about the Habs fortunes for the season, and how they had been dashed by poor coaching and poor on-ice performances. That sentiment is all the stronger today. I can only hope that next year is better and that those young players who stepped up this year will be leaders in the not-too-distant future.

While the trade deadline and the march to the playoffs are certainly at the forefront of almost every hockey fan's mind these days, there is still much more to talk about. The Detroit Red Wings have been on an amazing tear on home ice, setting a new NHL record for consecutive home wins. They have been absolutely dominant, and the late-game heroics provided by the likes of Pavel Datsyuk in extending the streak only make the story that much more compelling. The St. Louis Blues have been an equally remarkable story, having implemented Ken Hitchcock's air-tight defensive system to near-perfection, resulting in many shutouts for Brian Elliott and Jaroslav Halak, and propelling the Blues into the top tier of the Western Conference.



After a bit of a lull in product releases for the early portion of 2012, all three card companies will be very busy in March. Barring any product delays, this month will see the following releases:

Upper Deck Series 2 – March 6th



Panini Elite – March 12th
Upper Deck SP Game Used – March 21st
Upper Deck SPx – March 21st
Panini Playoff Contenders – March 28th
ITG Captain-C – late March

Be sure to check out all the latest box breaks, case breaks, show and tell days, and discussions about these exciting new releases.

One final note: SCF's birthday is on March 9th! Be sure to keep your eyes peeled for some awesome contests and great prizes! Until next month, see you around the boards!





Women in Racing - Appeal and Controversy

By Stephen Taylor aka race_crazy

As Danica Patrick is set to make her Nascar Sprint Cup Series debut in this year's Daytona 500 joining Shawna Robinson and Janet Guthrie as the only females to ever start the Great American Race, an age old question still remains present. Do women belong in racing? For many people even in today's society it remains a touchy subject but one that should be explored. Danica for her credit is a legitimate female racing driver and the only one to win a major oval event. However her path to the top has been in many fans eyes an overhyped, oversexualized, and overrated one. Danica herself started out as any other racer would, beating up on eventual Indycar star and Nascar driver Sam Hornish Jr. in go-karts as the two grew up in the midwest. She advanced series naturally but chose to boost her image by posing for various magazines and using her sex appeal to sell to potential sponsors (see: GoDaddy). Danica simply did this because as an attractive woman she had the option to and was offered and choose this path of exposure.



Many argue that this is the only reason she is at the top of her profession and in some ways they might be right. People should not fault Danica for taking advantage of her opportunities. It is no different than Carl Edwards posing shirtless on an ESPN or Men's Health Magazine yet Danica gets attacked for such measures. It is the unique situation of being an attractive and successful woman in a man's world essentially. There is always a negative eye yet also a positive one. It is a unique mix of fans either loving or hating. The natural reaction

from most fans is to see a woman succeed, however the general feeling is that most don't given the opportunity or aren't put in position to. Various female drivers have hurt their gender by producing less than stellar results. A lot of it is viewed as simply gathering attention by those in the racing business who take the stuff seriously. Drivers like Milka Duno, Maryeve Default, the Cope Twins, and countless others have had poor performance when oval racing in the major series and are viewed largely as jokes by the fans, the media, and their competitors. It is seen simply as a publicity stunt. As an oval racer, Danica Patrick is one of the only ones who has been accepted so far because she has the true talent to succeed and race.



Outside of the oval track series, the NHRA has succeeded for years with talented female drivers. Shirley Muldowney is a drag racing legend and many strong and fast women carry on her tradition of winning in the 300 mph straight line. Ashley Force and Courtney Force, John's daughters, are both highly successful winning drivers as are Erica Enders and Melanie Troxel. For whatever reason the NHRA has not struggled to fill this much needed demographic and for this they should be commended. Why the other series seem to struggle to find female talent remains a question. Are there as many racing as guys? No. However there are enough good ones that would thrive in a higher series of racing if given the right opportunity. We should all stop judging, paying attention to the media circus, and just focus on driving ability as to if women should be accepted into the sport of oval track racing and Nascar. I say if they can drive like Danica or up and comer Johanna Long-let them race. If they are out there for publicity and have shown no worthy talent other than being able to capture a sponsor to support them on their publicity tour, then I think that is rather ridiculous (just as it is for many of the male drivers who do the same thing). In short-they should be treated just like any other driver on the circuit-but we all know they aren't. Today they are all under the microscope-A microscope of interest largely due to Danica's fame, celebrity, and success. Whether this is fair or not is another question. The fans want to see a female succeed. Nascar wants to see a female succeed. Danica will succeed.

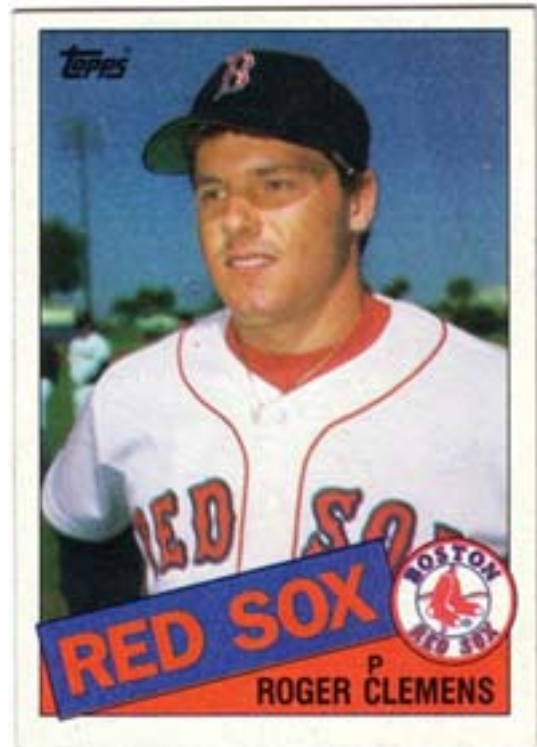




The Playing Field Was Even By Stephen Duell aka Spuds1961

Okay I figure the steroids issue has been battered to death,so one more article can't hurt. I find it disturbing that some of the greatest players from that era that are linked to performance enhancing drugs will most likely never make it into the Hall of Fame. I think that half if not more of the players were taking something,thus creating an equal playing field, if the pitcher, being say Roger Clemens is throwing to the hitter, say Rafael Palmeiro who really has the advantage?Both of them were juiced...

I also don't think that the drugs played a major role in the accomplishments these players achieved. I find it absurd that they will all have asterisks next to their names and what they accomplished. I mean weren't amphetamines a big part of the game in the 60s,just ask Jim Bouton author of Ball four and someone who was in the know. So what this tells me is it was okay to take speed in that era and perform amazing feats and no harm no foul, but for some reason the 80s is known as the steroids era, signifying an



un-
den
game.



The game was just as clean as it was in any other era, there are forms of cheating no matter what decade the game was being played in. The Black Sox scandal,where players were paid to actually throw a World Series,to me that is a worse offense than pumping drugs into your own body,as at the end of the day you are really only hurting yourself. I also find it funny how people can look down on these athletes as if they've never done anything wrong in their life,we as fans certainly weren't complaining the year McGwire and Sosa were in that memorable home run battle,70 for Big Mac 66 for slugging Sammy, if having the game be completely clean takes that type of thrill away from me as a fan I don't want it to be clean.



I find it hard to think that some of the greatest players I ever saw will never be included in the Hall of Fame. I would like to see a wing made for the players of this era, as they deserve some sort of recognition, let the fans decide for themselves how bad their offenses were. I mean with Jose Canseco writing a book and exposing as many players as he could who really knows how many players were actually clean or dirty? If a players stats were slanted by a lot from one season to the next how could someone not suspect that the player was using? When all is said and done these players were just trying to make the field even, as they knew their opponents were using, so to erase that perceived advantage they started using also.



In closing I still think the players I watched from that era were some of the best baseball had to offer, I also don't think they need to be excluded from a Hall of Fame where I'm sure many a tainted player resides, Like I said no one was complaining while we were watching these amazing feats, so why bother now?





Courtside

By Jay Weger aka Jay520

Contests & Winners

In February through 2/26 the standings for the NBA GTS look like this: pwaldo in 1st with 6 wins, samoan3d, TurdFerguson, gardzy99 and BC26 are all tied with 4 wins in second. JesRey, andrewhoya, gladdyontherise and k northrup make up 3rd with 3 wins each. And then there are 8 others tied in 4th with 2 wins. VIP NBA GTS through 2/26 has gladdyontherise out to a 4 win lead over his closest competitor with 15 wins. In 2nd is andrewhoya with 11 wins followed by bouncer in 3rd with 7 wins and 4th is sportscardrage with 6. Now on to the NBA Top Performers contest who has rocketfan86 and vixsportscards tied in 1st with 18 points through 2/26. 2nd is toddsr with 16 points and 3rd is Thrillseeker with 15 points. With only 3 games to guess it is anyone's to take in Feb. along with the 100 CC for 1st. Results of the NBA All-Star Weekend contest will be in the next SCF magazine. With March coming up that means the NCAA Tournament is right around the corner for you college basketball fans which will result in another March Madness Bracket contest. Please check the announcements to see when it is posted so you can try to predict the winners and take home a cool prize if you think you know NCAA Hoops. Also in March Theme Weeks will definitely be returning!!!

Hobby News

This month's hobby news can be summed up in 1 word "Lin-sanity". With Jeremy Lin's explosion on the court his cards felt the same kind of shock waves. Mere weeks before you could find his 10-11 base RCs from Prestige and Rookies & Stars for \$2-3 and parallel autos(/499, /599) for around \$15-20 with 10-11 Classics and 10-11 Playoff Contenders autos for the same price on eBay. Not the case after he made a splash, well actually like a tidal wave for the Knicks a few weeks ago! His base RC are now fetching \$20-30 with numbered parallels at \$40 to 50+. The autos from Prestige and Rookies & Stars are now at \$230-300+ while Classics and Contenders are the same. You can't find his National Treasures RC base/99 non auto for less than \$400, auto/99 for less than \$1,250 and GU auto/99 at around \$1,800-\$2,000+. And on 2/23 his National Treasures RC patch auto 17/25 sold for a staggering \$21,580 with others commanding \$16k and \$17k. Now you can't find boxes of these products without paying 50% more or double the price when they came out. Panini put on their site a picture of him in his Knicks uni with auto for the release of 11-12 Hoops to fuel the hype. So the question is will the cards tend to level off or come back down to earth over the course of the regular season?



NBA News

By bdoody42(Bryce)

This year's all-star festivities are being held in Orlando, Florida from February 24th through the 26th. Friday night will kick everything off with the NBA Celebrity All-Star game and be followed by The BBVA Rising Stars challenge where Shaq's and Chuck's team will square off to see what player drafted the best team. Some key players to be featured will be Blake Griffin, Jeremy Lin, John Wall, and many more up and coming rookies and sophomores. Saturday afternoon features the NBDL All-Star game where some aspiring players will get to showcase their talents to NBA executives. Saturday night features four action packed events.

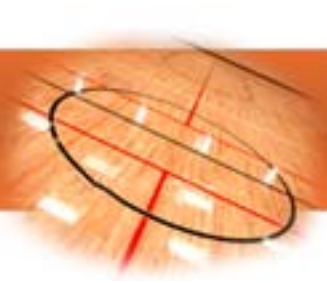


It all starts off with the Haier Shooting Stars. Following this will come the Taco Bell Skills challenge featuring last years winner Stephen Curry and some other amazing point GUards like, Tony Parker, John Wall, Russell Westbrook, Kyrie Irving, and Deron Williams. Next up is the Foot Locker Three-point contest. James Jones is back trying to defend his crown. It won't be easy with Kevin Love, Anthony Morrow, Mario Chalmers, Ryan Anderson, and Joe Johnson all looking to bring home the crown. To cap off the night comes the event many fans look forward to. The Sprite Slam Dunk Contest doesn't have many high profile names to reel in the casual fan, but Paul George, Jeremy Evans, Chase Budinger, and Derrick Williams will all be taking part. These young and talented players all should have something up their sleeves to bring fans out of their seats. Sunday nights NBA All-Star Game presented by KIA Motors is the finale to the weekend. This is where the stars come out and show what they can do.

Now for a break down of the rosters for both teams.

The East

The East's roster is as star studded as could be. Dwight Howard will be starting in the middle and this may be his last all star game as a member of the Magic. Dwyane Wade and LeBron James of the Miami Heat will once again both be starting. Carmelo Anthony will be the other forward besides James. Last year's MVP Derrick Rose will be starting at PG for the East. The bench includes many of the same names as in past years such as Chris Bosh, Paul Pierce, while Joe Johnson. Johnson will be unable to play, Rajon Rondo will be replace him. Deron Williams will be making his first all star appearance for the eastern conference. Roy Hibbert, Andre Iguodala, and Loul Deng will all be playing in their first All-Star game.



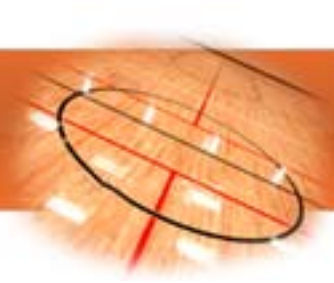
The West

This year's roster for the West has some familiar names, but also a few up and coming players. Kobe Bryant will be starting at the one of the guard spots for the West, nothing new there. Chris Paul who now shares the Staples Center with Kobe will be starting along side him. The forward spots will be filled by Kevin Durant and Blake Griffin. Andrew Bynum will be making his first all star game and is starting in the middle. The West bench also has some familiar faces in players such Tony Parker, Dirk Nowitzki, Steve Nash, Kevin Love and Russell Westbrook. Marc Gasol and LaMarcus Aldridge are making their first All-Star appearances.

All Star Snubs. Here are two guys who I felt were "snubbed" this year. Rajon Rondo would have been part of this list, but like mentioned before, he will be replacing Joe Johnson. Josh Smith is having one of the best years of his career. He is averaging career highs in rebounding, assists and steals. I feel as if he is as valuable to the hawks as Joe Johnson, if not more. Monta Ellis I feel is being snubbed for the second straight season. While Golden State doesn't own a winning record or much chance at the play-offs right now, Ellis is 6th in the league with 22.4 PPG and is almost averaging 6 apg. These are some amazing numbers for a player who is never thought of as a star.

Every year one of the hottest debate topics is who is this years MVP. Everyone has different criteria for MVP. Below is my top 5 MVP candidates halfway through the season.

1. **Lebron James-** Lebron is having one of the best statistical years in NBA history. He has a PER rating of nearly 33. That's almost unheard of!!! He is averaging basically 27PPG, 8 RPG, and 7apg while leading his team to the best record in the east. Lebron also dominates on defense by being one of the best defenders in the league. Nothing says MVP like being a star on both sides of the court.
2. **Kevin Durant** has been nothing short of amazing this year. He has increased his rebounds and blocks to an all time high. He is second in the league in scoring with almost 28PPG. To go along with his scoring, he is also getting 8 RPG and 3.4 APG. He has been extremely clutch in games this year including a buzzer beater three against the defending champions Mavericks. He is also leading his team to the best record in the western conference.
3. **Chris Paul** has completely changed the culture of the Clippers this year. He is helping this team close out games they lost last year. He is in the top 5 in both steals and assists half way through the season. His shooting numbers are also outstanding. 49% FG 87%FT 44%3PT. You can't ask for much more than this in a floor leader.
4. **Dwight Howard** is keeping the Magic team afloat so far this season. He is averaging 20PPG, 15RPG and over 2BPG. That makes him first in 1st in RPG and 4th in BPG. He is an anchor on defense for a team that's doesn't have any other above average defenders. He also demands a double team so much that he provides many open looks for his teammates. Let's just see how long he stays in a Magic jersey.



5. Kobe Bryant seems to have kept father time at bay for the first half of the season. He is leading the NBA in scoring to go along with his 6 RPG and 5APG. On a team with little depth, Kobe has carried a large load on his shoulders and is leading the Lakers to the playoffs.

Rookie of the year is another hot topic with some outstanding point guards.

1. Kyrie Irving has made the Cavaliers feel much better about their future, after a horrible season last year. Irving is the main reason for this turnaround. He leads the rookies in scoring at 18.1 PPG and 5apg. He has helped the Cavs finish games that they would lose last year.

2. Ricky Rubio is the only rookie I could see catching Irving at the top. Rubio is in the top 5 of the league in both steals and assists, which is pretty amazing for a rookie. I think his best attribute has been giving the Timberwolves an identity and someone to set up there good scorers. If they continue to grow as a team they could make the playoffs.

3. Kemba Walker is my next choice, after the two guys above. He is trying to help a rebuilding team head in the right direction. He is 3rd among rookies in PPG and APG. Once he gets better teammates, I think his percentages will increase.

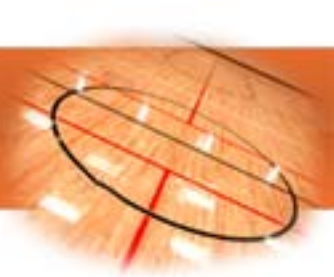
4. MarShon Brooks is a scoring machine at heart and is making the Celtics feel dumb that they traded him away. He is second in PPG among rookies and looks to be a very good NBA scorer.

5. Kawai Leonard is doing a lot of the dirty work for the Spurs. His numbers of 7.1PPG and 4.7RPG don't stand out, but he's assisting in the Spurs having the second best record in the west without Manu Ginobili for an extended amount of time.

Every year contenders add pieces near the deadline in order to increase their chances in the playoffs. The Knicks acquired JR Smith when he returned to the NBA, after playing overseas in China. The Knicks hope he can spread the floor and open up space for Amare, Lin, and Carmelo. The Clippers also decided to pick up a former Nugget player in Kenyon Martin. They hope he can add some toughness and depth to the front court. Aaron Brooks and Wilson Chandler will also soon be shopping for teams to join. I am sure many playoff bound squads would love to add these two. The Lakers recently worked out Gilbert Arenas, but have yet to make a decision.

Hot teams and Players

Heading into the All-Star break, some teams have really separated themselves from the rest of the pack. In the west, the Thunder lead by Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook, have them sitting atop the western conference. The Spurs recently had a 12 game win streak snapped when coach Greg Popovich decided to rest Tim Duncan, Tony Parker, and Manu Ginobili. This streak propelled them into 2nd in



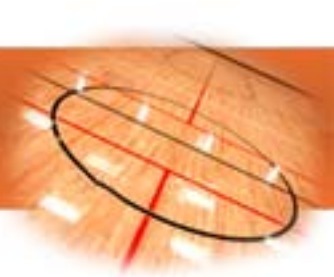
the western conference. The east is lead by the Big 3 in Miami. They seem to be gelling as a team right now and everyone is playing their role. The Bulls, despite Derrick Rose's injury problems, sit right behind the Heat in the east. When this team is back to 100%, the NBA should be on alert. Within the last month a basically unknown player in Jeremy Lin has become an American sensation. "Linsanity" has literally covered the pages of every sports website and magazine produced. With Lin providing an inspiring story for everyone to look up to, he has lead the Knicks back into the playing scene. It will be interesting to see how this team performs after the All Star break once Carmelo Anthony is back in playing form.

Packs & Box Breaks

With no new products out yet 10-11 Elite Black Box was still the big draw. baralufficus132 opened 4 boxes getting him GU /99 of LeBron James, Larry Bird, Alex English prime/25 and Ben Gordon patch/15, Draft Class prime GU/99 of Wilkins/ Worthy/Floyd, Passing the Torch logoman autos of Brandon Jennings/ Nate ARChibald/49 and Chauncy Billups/ Walt Frazier/25, Bill Russell auto/5 and lastly a Jerry West flag patch auto/5.s13driver got a box and pulled a Bryon Russell auto/5 and a Passing the Torch logoman GU/100 of Kevin Love/Dennis Rodman. 11-12 SP Authentic had some nice hits pulled by #50 Tyler Hansbrough who got a UNC Floor card J.R. Reid, Home Court Sig. Bobby Hurley/40 and a nice LeBron Lames auto. advan24r opened 1 box to pull both a UNC Floor card and Home Court Sig. of Brad Daugherty and a Demetri McCamey auto. bigsmokewho opened 4 boxes pulled UNC Floor cards of Brad Daugherty, J.R. Reid and Sam



Perkins, Home Court Sig. Bill Laimbeer and Robert Horry, College Pride auto of Bobby Hurley/40 and By the Letter autos/25 of Tubby Smith. 10-11 Totally Certified was hot as people were in seaRCh of emeralds/5. FuriousD82 opened a box and pulled a Terrico White RC GU auto/599, Vince Carter gold base/25 and a sweet Tyreke Evans Certified Potential auto/5. IamRalpho got Jordan Crawford RC GU auto/595 and sick John Wall RC Gold prime patch auto/25. But one of



the best hits from 10-11 Totally Certified came from dogboy34 who landed a Kevin Garentt Black 1/1 base!!

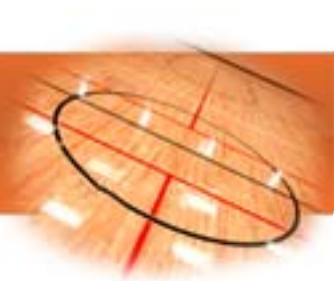
Other Panini product breaks were 10-11 Classics by baralufficus132 pulling RC autos/699 of Dominique Jones and Membership GU of Dennis Rodman/100. bigp621 got a box and pulled Evan Turner RC auto/299 and the hit everyone wants a Jeremy Lin RC auto/699. RyU hit Stephen Curry Monikers Gold auto/99 from 10-11 Limited. telicious got a box as well hitting a sick John Wall RC Next Day auto/99. advan24r got a Shawn Marion Prestigious Pros patch/25 and a Jeremy Lin base RC from 10-11 Prestige and one from 10-11 Rookies&Stars. ledford94 just opened 9 packs of 10-11 Prestige to find a Jeremy Lin base RC amongst a Joe Johnson Stars of the NBA GU/49. 07-08 Hot Prospects proved to be rewarding for hearseGUy27 pulling 2 Notable Newcomers of Durant to go with a Durant RC patch auto/399. sportsGUy2213 did nicely as well getting a Rodney Stuckey RC patchauto/399 and a Dennis Rodman Stat Tracker dual GU auto/50. Other nice hits came from bigsmoke who hit a MJ/LeBron dual GU from a 09-10 UD blaster. tylerg30 Brandon Roy Personal Touch auto/24 and a Ricky Rubio auto/75 from 10-11 Ultimate Collection. JordanFanatic hit a MJ Missing Links GU from 07-08 fleer and killed a box of 09-10 Topps hitting a DeMarr DeRozan McDonalds auto, Stephen Curry Chrome RC/99 and a better Stephen Curry Chrome Gold refractor/50.

Super Collector & Collecting Milestones

Nina has reached super Collector status with her magnificent UCLA Bruin auto collection. Nina(Nancy) started collecting Bruin autos after their 95 NCAA Championship win and tries her best to catch every game she can on TV which is hard when she lives in Germany. Her favorite UCLA players are Kevin Love and Ryan Hollins as well as Bill Walton and Gail Goodrich. She has 390+ UCLA Bruin autos (uni only) from 92 Classics to 11-12 SP Authentic.

Here is her Top 10 UCLA Bruin autos:

10. 2011-12 SP Authentic By The Letter #BLBH Ben Howland (spelling UCLA)
9. 2009-10 Playoff National Treasures #237 Darren Collison JSY AU /99
8. 2009-10 Prestige NBA Draft Class Autographs Logos College #17 Jrue Holiday /100
7. 2006-07 Upper Deck Rookie Debut Ink #JF Jordan Farmar + Gold /25
6. 2011-12 SP Authentic By The Letter #BLRW Russell Westbrook (spelling UCLA)
5. 2010-11 Ultimate Collection All-Time Draft Signatures #28 Gail Goodrich Gold /75 + Silver /5
4. 2006-07 Press Pass Legends Naismith Award Winners Autographs Platinum #2 Bill Walton AU #ed /25 (Go Bruins Inscriptions #ed x/8)
3. 2008-09 Press Pass Legends Select Signatures #KL Kevin Love Red ink + Blue ink #ed x/3
2. 2009-10 Greats of the Game Legends of the Hall #HOFKA Kareem Abdul-Jabbar #ed 1/5
1. 2006-07 Fleer Hot Prospects Draft Day Postmarks Autographs #RH Ryan Hollins #ed 015/100 #-number



In Collecting Milestones, there are a couple of small ones this month and 1 giant completion. First off is jjprt80 who completed the Kevin Durant 08-09 UD StarQuest rainbow (UD FE, common, uncommon, rare, super rare, ultra rare, majestic). Some were harder to come by than others and is now thinking of doing the master set. fireice113 finished up his search of Dirk Nowitzki and Ray Allen Exquisite base from 03-04 to 09-10. Not a hard task to complete but took some time because of being overbid at times. Now onto the giant collecting milestone of gatorboymike who finally finished the 94-95 Finest refractor set. The 94-95 set has 331 total cards which is 50% bigger than either of the 93-94 or 95-96 sets. After 17 years of looking all over the place it is finished. The last card needed to finish the set was the Jason Kidd RC. The big names are MJ(\$250), Grant Hill RC(\$150), Jason Kid RC (\$150), Shaq(\$96) and Pippen(\$70). Others were harder to find because of the perceived scarcity like the Glen Rice CY, Chris Webber CY.





The “Collectability” of the 2011 Rookie Class

By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert

As anyone in the sports card world knows, collector’s minds, eyes, and wallets are quick to move on. It’s the next big thing, or the next hot prospect. Out with John Wall; in with Jeremy Lin. So long Joe Mauer; hello Buster Posey. Sidney Crosby? Nah, I’ll take Evgeni Malkin.

This is never truer than for this year’s football collectors. Fresh off the New York Giants underdog win over the New England Patriots, it’s time for the NFL Combine. Bye bye Cam Newton and Andy Dalton; nice to meet you Andrew Luck and Robert Griffin III. Just look at the release calendar for March... On the same day that one of 2011’s most (if not THE most) sought after products, 2011 National Treasures, releases, so does 2012 (yes, 2012) Leaf Metal, the first product with most of the top choices from the 2012 NFL Draft, a full month before the draft, and only two-plus months removed from the 2011 Super Bowl.

Sometimes, it’s actually OK to pause and reflect about the past. This is certainly the case when looking at the amazing seasons that 2011 rookies had, and their “collectability” going forward. Whether it was a skill position on offense, like QB, WR, or even RB, or key unsung positions like DE and OL, the 2011 rookie class had an impact that could reverberate for many, many seasons, both on the field and in your wallets. For a select few of the class, the flashes of brilliance shown in their freshman season could find them in Canton by the end of their careers, and should find their way into your personal collections.

Here is a look back at the fantastic seasons, and the cardboard impact, of the 2011 rookies that will be awfully hard to overlook in 2012:



While the 2011 rookie QB crop won’t be confused any time soon with the immortal 1983 draft class of Elway, Marino, and Jim Kelly, the quarterbacks this season certainly made their mark. Even those with high expectations of #1 overall pick Cam Newton had to be impressed with his year. Cam racked up the most passing yards by a rookie in a season and single game in NFL history, along with the most rushing touchdowns of any QB in NFL history (14). He single-handedly changed

the fate, and face, of a struggling franchise in Carolina (Jimmy Clausen, anyone?). He was voted the AP Offensive ROY, and was given a Pro Bowl nod as well. He quickly showed all of his early doubters that he not only belonged, but would be a force, not only against defenses, but against your budget as well.



Andy Dalton, the Bengals rookie signal caller, proved that even though he came from a non-traditional football school (TCU), he could more than cut it in the pros. Andy led his Bengals to the playoffs, and, like his counterpart in Carolina, was also named to the Pro Bowl. He remains a much cheaper collecting option than Cam, and if he keeps his 2011 form could have a Philip Rivers-type upside to collectors.

Flashes of brilliance were also shown by a few other members of the 2011 QB class. Jake Locker showed that he is ready to take the reins from Matt Hasselbeck in Tennessee with his ability to move the ball with both his arm and his legs. His card values remain at the top of the QB class as well, however. T.J. Yates emerged from 3rd on the depth chart to lead his Houston Texans to a playoff win, the only rookie QB to do so, filling in for the injured Matt Schaub and prospect-turned-bust Matt Leinart. It remains to be seen if Blaine Gabbert, Christian Ponder, and Colin Kaepernick have what it takes to lead their respective teams, and collectors seemed to cool on them as the season progressed. Ryan Mallett of the Patriots provides an interesting conundrum for collectors.

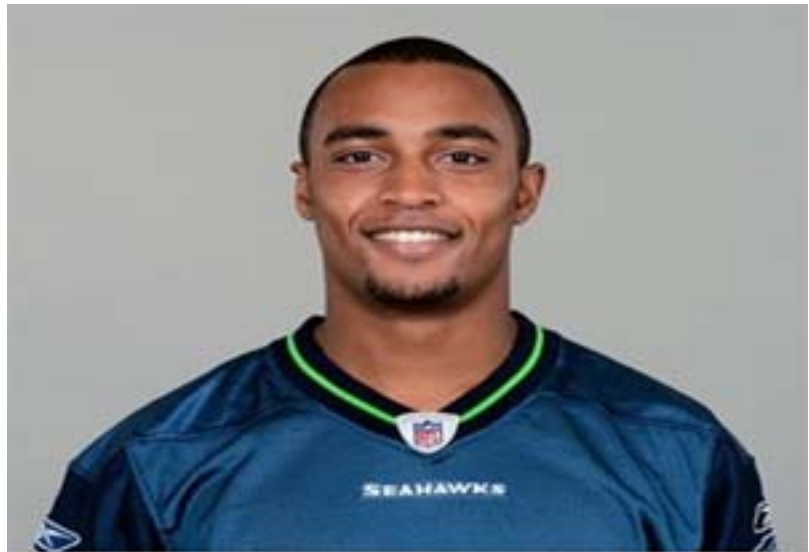


Do you stockpile a guy who sits behind a still-elite Tom Brady, hoping for an Aaron Rodgers-like return on your investment? Or are you simply collecting the next Matt Gutierrez or Kevin O'Connell? Will Ricky Stanzi get a shot in KC, or Terrelle Pryor in Oakland? The Chiefs have a lukewarm collecting base, but that is certainly not so for the Silver and Black. It appears there are plenty of options going forward with the QB class of 2011.

At the wideout position, many players showed flashes, but a select few stood out. A.J. Green quickly not only became the favorite target of fellow rookie Dalton in Cincy, but also showed that he was one of the top pass-catching threats in the NFL, becoming the first rookie receiver to make the Pro Bowl since Anquan Boldin in 2003. Julio Jones was also hot on collector's lists, adding to an already potent arsenal in Atlanta. Only Green's total of 65 bested Greg Little's 61 grabs for Cleveland as a rookie in 2011. He will, no doubt, be given plenty of chances with the talent-starved Browns, and the rumored addition of a certain soon-to-be ex-Colts QB will only help his hobby chances. His cards can be found relatively cheaply.



Coming out of nowhere was undrafted Doug Baldwin, leading the Seahawks in both catches and yards. Torrey Smith became a deep threat in Baltimore, notching a 3 TD game en route to a 50 grab season. Quietly, Boise State product Titus Young hauled in 48 grabs as a key part of a potent Lions offense. All three provide decent collecting value for the money. Also deserving a mention are deep threat Denarius Moore in Oakland, end of the season standout Dan Sanzenbacher in Chicago, and early season burner and big-play threat Randall Cobb in Green Bay, always a hotbed for collectors.



The running back position was one his by major injuries in 2011. In a further testament to his remarkable 2011 season, Cam Newton's 14 rushing TDs were more than the total of the best rookie running backs... COMBINED. Only the Saints' Mark Ingram had more than 2 rushing TD's (5). The class may have at least one superstar, however, in Dallas Cowboys RB DeMarco Murray. In an injury shortened season (notice the theme), he rushed for 897 yards on 5.5 yards per carry, and changed the look and feel of a struggling Cowboys running game. His cards took a huge leap after Week 7, but rushing for 250+ yards will tend to do that. Ryan Williams of Arizona and Mikel LeShoure of Detroit were both lost to injury early in camp, but figure to get an extended look in 2012. Their cards have softened heavily, and could be great bargains if they get the bulk of the carries going forward. Roy Helu, Jr., Daniel Thomas, Kendall Hunter, Stevan Ridley, Delone Carter and even Evan Royster all filled in for their respective teams in spot starts or light duty, but it remains to be seen if they are the long-term answer. Fullbacks get absolutely zero hobby love, but keep one eye out on Miami's versatile Charles Clay, and newly minted Super Bowl champion Henry Hynoski. They could be sleeper hits for their respective teams, and for collectors (think John Kuhn in GB).

It was a relatively weak tight end class in 2011, especially as it compares to what could be an all-time great class in 2010 (Graham, Gronk, Hernandez and Ballard to name a few). All four of the top pass catchers at TE were hurt by extremely erratic QB play on their teams: Lance Kendricks (STL), Kyle Rudolph (MIN), Rob Housler (ARI), and Luke Stocker (TB). All four could be seen as solid buys for 2012.

Linemen on either side of the ball, while incredibly important to the game, don't seem to garner much



interest from collectors. That being said, there were more than a few who made an impact from the OL and DL.

On the offensive side, the Eagles may have found two players they can build around in C Jason Kelce and G Danny Watkins. Tackle Nate Solder allowed Bill Belichick to implement a “super jumbo” package on offense. Dallas’ Tyron Smith is another in a long line of young, talented O-linemen in Big D, while Stefen Wisniewski reminded many of his uncle, Steve, in Oakland. Finally, Mike Pouncey seems to be the answer at C for Miami. Will collectors think any of these guys are the answer for their collections?

On the defensive side of the ball, two rookies seemed to garner most of the attention, from opposing coaches and collectors alike: Von Miller (DEN) and Aldon Smith (SF). Miller first gained notoriety as one of the players suing the NFL over the lockout. As soon as the lockout ended, he gained much more attention for pounding the quarterback. Miller and the stellar Denver D were the unsung heroes of the Fighting Tebow’s, keeping young Tim close enough over four quarters to allow for his comebacks, and their playoff berth. For his efforts, Miller was a Pro Bowl selection at season’s end, and an NFL All-Pro Second Team selection.



Just as Miller was changing things in Denver, Aldon Smith was leading the resurgence of the 49ers. Smith led all rookies in sacks, and rode his success to the playoffs and Pro Bowl just like his counterpart, Miller.

There is, however, one other player that may have overshadowed ALL other rookies this year not named Cam Newton: Arizona Cardinals’ superstar CB/PR Patrick Peterson. His gaudy numbers were put up as a return man, however, not on the defensive side of the ball. Peterson had many talking about a certain “Prime Time” player when it came to comparisons. Patrick ran back an NFL record 4 punts for touchdowns, and his 699 PR yards are the second highest in NFL history. He also led the NFL, not just rookies, in a new stat called Approximate Value (think something along the lines of “how important you are to your team, and how much you affect their chances of winning”), with a rating of 25, the 5th highest total for any single player, EVER. Peterson was a Pro Bowl starter and an NFL All-Pro First Team selection, a rarity for a rookie. Collectors jumped on his cards, and for much of the season, partly due to a lack of autographed or game-used/worn cards, Peterson was as hot as anyone.



There were plenty of other surprises on the defensive side of the ball. Good things seem to come in pairs for many NFL teams. Houston's tandem of J.J. Watt (DE) and Brooks Reed (LB) helped them to an improbable playoff run. Tennessee's LB Akeem Ayers and DT Jurrell Casey anchored a solid defense for what could be an up-and-coming team. In Seattle, the Seahawks' rookie CB tandem of Brandon Brewer and Richard Sherman combined for 10 INTs, including Sherman's rookie-leading 6. Mason Foster and Adrian Clayborn seem to be on the rise in Tampa Bay.

Other solo defensive rookie standouts include Jabaal Sheard, the third-leading rookie sacker, for Cleveland, LB Ryan Kerrigan for the Redskins, San Diego's LB Donald Butler, and DT Marcel Dareus in Buffalo. With collectors focusing on the aforementioned two major stars, Miller and Smith, will any of these others get any hobby love?

Rounding out the list of rookies are two kickers, Dan Bailey of Dallas, and Alex Henery in Philly. Bailey hit 27 of his first 28, including 6 for 6 in Week 3. All Henery did was replace franchise icon David Akers in Philadelphia, and not miss a single kick after Week 4. The hobby is usually slow to collect and quick to dump kickers, but they usually maintain at least a niche following.

In my humble estimation, 2011's class of rookies has the potential to be one of the most balanced and talented drafts in recent memory. Some tend to be heavy at one position (RBs in 2008, QBs in 2004), and some are just prospects gone bad (2006, I'm looking at you, Reggie Bush, Matt Leinart, and Vince Young), but 2011 could go down as one of the best, and one of the most collectible.





Anyone Remember When this Was Just a Hobby

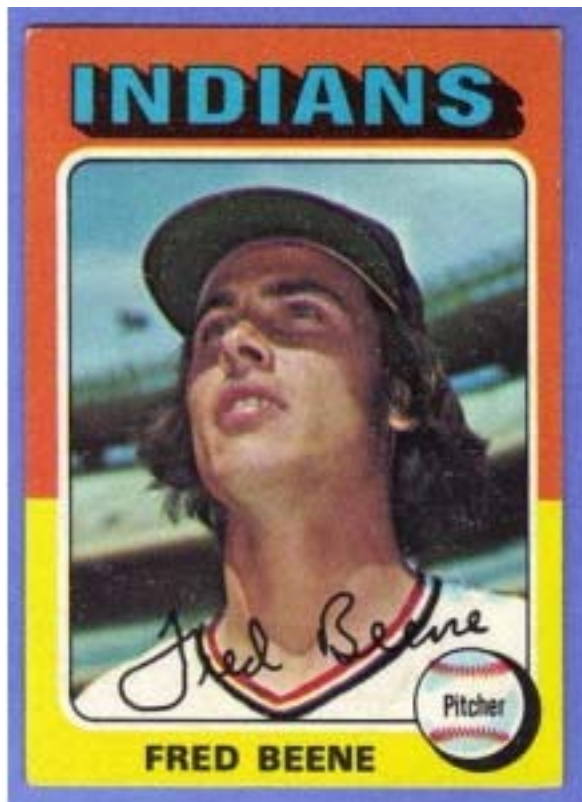
By Kelly Burrington aka yazfan71

Well, I sure do and I miss those days. I miss the times when my friends and I would go around and collect pop bottles for the refund so we could go buy packs of cards and a bottle of pop. We'd sit down outside on the curb and rip open our packs and you'd hear a half dozen kids in harmony saying "need em, need em, got em, need em, got em...." Then the trading would commence....

"Hey, I'll give you a Lou Brock & a Goose Gossage for that Pete Rose & Dave Concepcion?"

"Nah, I got 4 Brock's already, do you got any Fred Beene's?"

It was kinda like a game of Go Fish. Now the game is more like Advanced Business Economics 101 & you need a good credit score just to play!



It saddens me in a way to watch kids go into card shops open a pack of cards and watch them just leave them on the counter if they hit nothing but base cards. After all, they are the future of the hobby. If they don't care about anything other than autos and game used what is going to happen to the hobby? It's almost as if they honestly believe the original owner of that Wagner card that gets sold every few years for millions of dollars actually put it away somewhere and said "This is gonna make me rich someday!" Now, he may have said that, but I highly doubt it. Chances are better that he went home and gave it to his son, who must have been a Wagner fan and the kid actually took care of it. Shocking isn't it?

It's all about the gamble today. Back then, our gambling was putting a random card down against a friend and then taking an old checklist card and trying to toss it in a ball cap. I would spend hours practising that and dinged up quite a few checklists from the 70s in the process! If we did it today people would be checking price guides and sale values on eBay. Not to mention they'd be using the overproduced cards from late 80s and early 90s to toss in the cap. The simple fact was

that a card was a card. Oh sure, you may have to give two or three cards of players that weren't that well known for a more popular player from time to time just to sweeten the deal, but who, in today's hobby wouldn't give up those extra cards of Beene to get a Rose?



Granted it was easier to get all of the cards of your favorite players back then as there were only at the most three or four cards of them in the entire set. Oddball sets were like the inserts of today because you never knew when you were going to get a chance to pick them up. You either had to wait for the cereal box to be empty or trade those empty pop bottles in for a pack of Hostess Twinkies. One thing that was really nice was when the rack packs came out you could at least see the top & bottom cards to see if you needed them for sure to finish the set. It makes me wonder why someone felt that the hobby needed to change.

Apparently whoever was in charge had never heard the saying “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” When you look at what they have to add to cards today to make them desirable to most hobbyists it really makes them sad in comparison. Seriously, when did the ’52 Mantle, ’68 Ryan, ’75 Yount or ’82 Ripken need any additives to make them desirable? Not too mention that once the next product is released, the percentage of people still interested in “last years model” reduces significantly. What had worked for Topps for nearly 30 years without any competition gets thrown out like yesterday’s trash these days. In retrospect I think I preferred getting the Fred Beene base cards then hitting a Rick Porcello autographed jersey card numbered to 100 as a so-called randomly inserted prize!

Now sure, I have autographed, game used, and serial numbered cards of Yastrzemski, but I would take his ’66 punch out, ’73 pin up or ’74 puzzle any day of the week!

Thanks again for reading the ramblings of an old man. I do apologize if I offended anyone out there that collects Fred Beene or Rick Porcello cards as that was not my intention, they just happened to be the two that I chose at random for my analogies.





Why I Collect

By Robert Bullough aka Kurri17

As collectors, the cards we collect and our reasons for collecting vary widely. We all have our story, especially us old guys, and here is mine.



I remember the first card I ever owned, a 1971 Topps Dick Green. I was seven. I don't recall how it came into my possession, nor did I realize what that single card was going to inspire. I'll be honest, at that time I didn't even know who Dick Green was, with the only athlete that I recall having knowledge of at that time being Johnny Unitas. But the times they were about to change.

You see, my father was a rolling stone, to put it mildly, and kindly. From birth until fourth grade we lived in eighteen different apartments/houses spread over six states, ten cities, and one U.S. territory, attending six schools in my first three years of school. This always brings about the idea that he was in the military. Yes, but all but one of these locations came after he was out of the military. Go figure.

It was somewhere in the middle of all that moving that the fall of 1971 came along. My Dick Green card had made the trip from Kentucky to California with me, and when we landed in a small motel just down the street from your prototypical corner store, it was the trigger which started me on my to collecting way.

I soon ran across the 1971 Topps football packs, which I started to amass at every available opportunity as I started to watch every football game that came on TV, including the CFL. It was in this motel that my love affair with sports began. And finally, that Dick Green card came to life as my soon to be beloved Oakland A's filled our black and white TV screen on a regular basis due to our location in Sacramento.

Now, I'm not going to turn this into a biography, but some background is helpful in this case to lay the foundation for the how and why I started collecting, and more importantly, the why and impact of that collecting.



You see, it was over the next two and a half years, moving seven times, that cards, both football and baseball, became a centrepiece in my life. When you move that much, you don't take a whole lot with you. Everything my parents, my sister and I owned fit into the smallest U-Haul they made, with about half the space left to spare. But no matter where we were, I had my boxes of cards and a floor or bed to spread them on. Whether it was the stack of psychedelic 1972 Topps baseball or football with my Roger Staubach (of course we know it as a RC now, but then it was the Cowboys young quarterback), or my near complete sets of every set from '73 and '74 (which grew over the years all the way through '79), they were always there. They were not just images on a TV screen, they were right there where I could hold them, get to know them, see where they came from and learn about the highlights of their careers. They were sorted by team first, by position next, and of course from starters to backups after that. They had a personality, forged from the style of their card front, but also brought on by the location from which they were attained.

They were companions, playmates, constants in a life devoid of pretty much any other constant. My friends often collected, but not with the fervor that I did. Who is Dick Green, they might ask when I asked if they had one to trade. That would lead to a young boy's version of a dissertation of the merits of the A's second baseman. For reasons you might be able to surmise from this story, I seemed to mature, in some aspects, a bit early. I didn't just hope my team won and get mad at them when they didn't. I pulled for them with all of my being, but felt pain for them at their losses, understanding at a young age about the inevitability of failure, loss, and struggle. You see, I knew those guys. You support your guys, you don't turn against them or abandon them. I spent every night with them. I knew their opponents too, with their strengths well documented on the backs of their cards as well, and understood that those guys were good too, and my guys weren't going to win them all (this could send me off on a tangent about the manner in which those A's teams of the early '70s won, but I'll spare you that).

You see, those cards had a special feel all their own to me. You know how a passing scent may bring back a memory, that's how those cards of my youth are to me. The year and style of the card being the background of where I lived at that time, a sort of cardboard timeline.

I've moved on and aged, collecting all but a few years of my life. It's different now. But, those cards of the '70s bear little personal resemblance to those collected as an adult. They were, and are, special. They were the very fabric of my childhood, marking the passage of time and seasons with the images of my heroes.



An All-Star Autograph Chaser By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888



Remember when you were a kid? How much did you idolize your favorite players? How often did you dream about having the chance to meet them? You'd go to the game, watch it and afterwards, hoped that your dad wouldn't mind waiting around for a bit so that you'd get to meet your hero...All too often though, your dad would be working the next day or would tell you that it was a school night and you needed to get back home and go to bed and just like that, all hope faded...I'm speaking from experience, even though my hero often played at the Colisée de Québec when I was growing up, I still had to wait until I was 29 to finally get the chance to meet him. You know, when you have your own means of transportation and you get to decide yourself where and when you go...

Some people are luckier than that though, if you spend enough time on SCF, you've more than likely come across Barrie Grice aka Prime B. He is a collector just like all of us but he also loves chasing autographs along with his son Austin. If you have time, I highly recommend heading to the Show and Tell hockey forum and searching for the "Adventure of Austin" threads, you won't be disappointed.

Recently, Barrie and Austin got to meet one, if not the greatest NHL player, Sidney Crosby. We're all aware that Sid has not exactly been having a great year and it is rather refreshing to see that he still takes the time to please the fans! As a picture is worth a thousand words, have a look at these snaps and send positive thoughts Crosby's way, the sport, the league and the hobby need him back!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgqCYKQbP38&feature=youtu.be>







The End of the Adventures of Austin Era: Bailey and the Kings Visist my Son in Hospital

By Barrie Grice aka Prime B



Where do I start? I am still absolutely emotionally drained from everything that has gone on in my life the past 2 weeks, starting with the premature birth of our son Blake Charles Grice all the way through today where I am trying to regain some semblance of a normal routine...no rest for the weary right?

For those of you that don't know, after I posted the announcement of the sudden and unexpected birth of my son Blake and his rough entry and start in this world, it seems a certain furry lion mascot was lurking on the internet.

One Bailey The Lion saw what was going on and proceeded to reach out to my family and I, first through a member of the Kings front office and then through his handler/trainer with the Kings organization.

What transpired since that day last week it nothing short of INCREDIBLE.

First a shout out from Bob Miller the night before the Kings arrived, you'll have to turn your volume up to hear this one.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNkY9...ature=youtu.be>

It was arranged for Bailey to come and visit my newborn son Blake in the Neonatal ICU at the hospital where he is currently a patient all the way from Los Angeles.

Bailey also decided that coming there would be a wonderful way to welcome Blake into the Kings family but didn't want our other son Austin to feel left out.

So Bailey, with the help of the Kings PR and Broadcast crew, had Austin meet with Jarret Stoll, Brad Richardson and Daryl Evans before the game and film a piece for FSW.



It was amazing. They met outside the Kings locker room, talked to Austin , gave him a jersey, just made him feel like one of the guys. They were all so amazing with him and Austin did very well, even though he told me he was "shy" and "scared of the TV stuff".

I noticed as he walked up how scared his face looked with all the bright lights. But then something MAGICAL happened!

Bailey took Austin's hand and and just walked him right into the midst of it all. And Austin was calm as could be with his friend Bailey by his side.

I stood back as far as I could for two reasons: this was all about my sons and two, I was choking back tears I was so thoroughly touched.



If you could have felt what I did and seen how sweet Bailey was with my son.....I am almost crying writing this right now.

Look at some of the pictures and see if you can truly feel the warmth and love pouring out of Baily's heart of gold and my son reciprocating the emotion and love to Bailey. Just seeing them walk with their arms around each other, the hugs, I could FEEL the love, it was so incredible.

There is even one shot of Bailey hugging my son Blake's incubator. My wife and I were so touched when we saw that SO touched!

In fact, the timing of all this, especially for big brother Austin, couldn't have been better because after today (Halloween) Austin won't be able to go in to the NICU see his baby brother until he is ready to come home. So yesterday's incredible day will hopefully help ease the hard transition for Austin while he is separated form his baby brother Blake for awhile.

I honestly could go on for days thanking people so here is the SHORT list of people who had a hand in



making this happen:

BAILEY! Bailey's handler/trainer. Mike Zampelli, Daryl Evans. Bob Miller. Jim Fox. Chris Kingsley. Jeff Moller. Mike Kalinowski. Fox Sports West. Jarret Stoll. Brad Richardson. Anze Kopitar. Chris McGowan. Luc Robitaille. Rich Hammond. The entire LA Kings Organization. All my friends and family and fellow Kings fans. Oh and BAILEY!

Austin LOVES Bailey, he absolutely adores that lion and Blake will too. Heck, who am I kidding,

my wife and I LOVE Bailey. Have your man crushes on the players, I am crushing on Bailey with ZERO shame!

Also, I'd be remiss if I wasn't a classy Kings fan so I want to send a special thanks to Bernie, the Avalanche mascot for tagging along to the hospital as well as a thank you to the Avalanche organization for being such gracious hosts to us in their facility and giving us access to everything. But BOOOOOOOOO on them for wining the game!

Here are some images from the day on Sunday, enjoy and FEEL the LOVE, it's amazing, my heart is just bursting with warmth and pride.





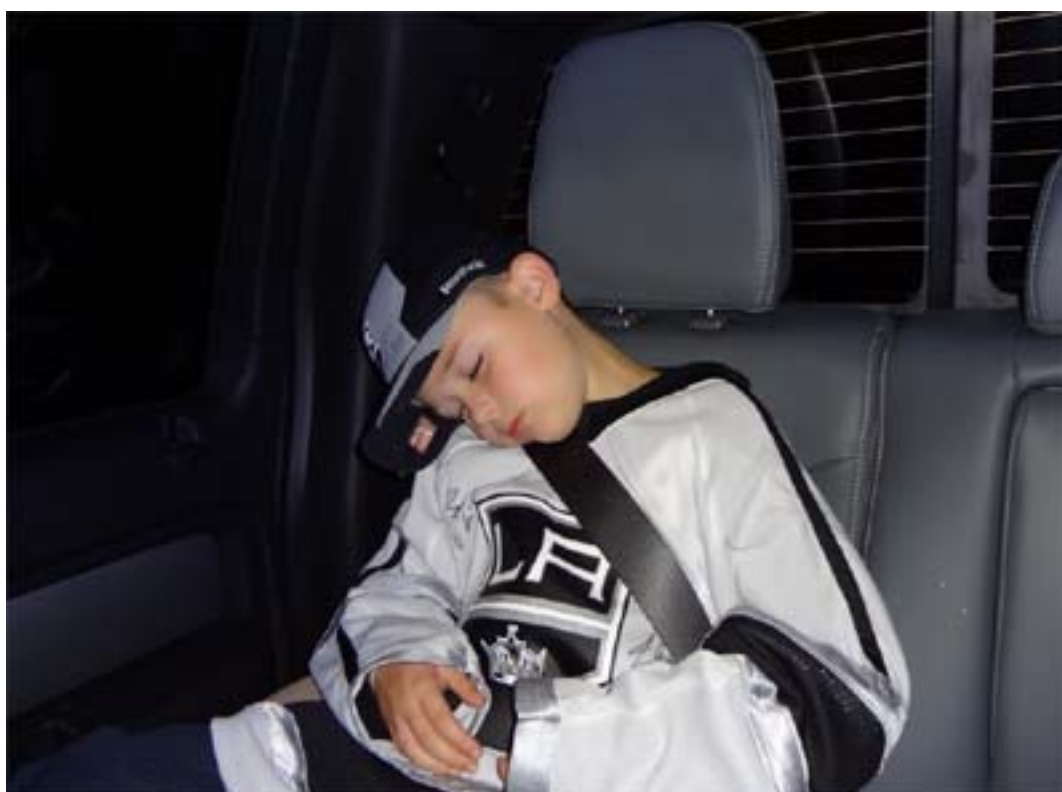
Here is some of the media coverage and the video the Kings did which is so touching.

<http://video.kings.nhl.com/videocent...=731&id=132285>

<http://lakingsinsider.com/2011/11/03...-a-little-fan/>



THE END





As if this all wasn't touching enough, if you can believe it, there will be even more to this story.

I can't divulge any of that as of now, we'll have to wait until everything happens.

Here was our Halloween "present" to Bailey the next day as a small thank you. I spent a good 2 hours carving these and they turned out great. Bailey even shared the single image I took of his pumpkin on his Facebook page!

If you're not a little bit of a Kings fan now or at least a fan of their mascot Bailey, check yourself for a pulse. again, my family are were absolutely touched beyond words by the the first class handling of this by the LA Kings organization.

LETS GO KINGS. LETS GO BLAKE!

