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### **Editor and Publisher**

Karine Hains

### **Graphics**

Anthony Christiana

### **Writing Team**

Richard McAdams

Sean McCafferty

### **Team Contacts**

Stephen Taylor

J.R. Lebert

Bryce Doody and Jay Weger

Richard McAdam





## You Never Can Tell By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

As you will see by reading these pages, some of our articles were written about a week or so before publication. What will give it away? Well, for one thing our resident hockey expert, Richard McAdam predicted in the hockey team page that Crosby's Pens would advance in 6 and reach the Stanley Cup final. Fast forward a week and the star studded Penguins have been swept by Chara and his Goons uh...Bruins (sorry that was a complete mistake, not at all intended). While I am livid to see the Bs make a second trip to the final in 3 years, this is what I love about pro sports : you never can tell...

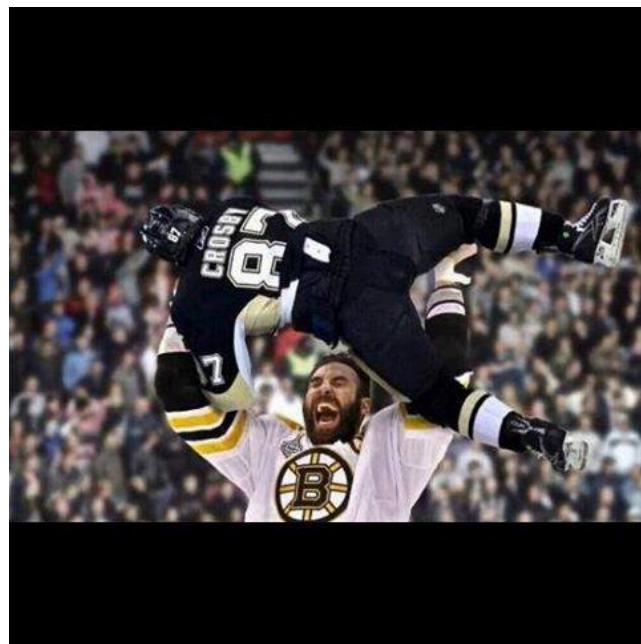


Back at the trade deadline when Ray Shero went in overdrive and added Jarome Iginla, Brenden

Morrow and Douglas Murray to an already packed line-up, the Ottawa Senators' coach, Paul MacClean said in a half joking manner : « I don't know why we're ever bothering with having the playoffs we might as well just give them the cup now ». Many actually agreed with

this statement, heck, Jarome Iginla must have agreed too as he chose to go to Pittsburgh rather than Boston judging that they would give him a better chance to win it all but everyone forgot about one thing... You know when Marc Bergevin didn't make any big trade at the deadline, he said he didn't want to mess up his team's chemistry, while many said that was just an excuse I tended to agree with him and I also thought back then that Pittsburgh, for all the firepower they had added, was literally playing with fire. The fact of the matter is that even if you bring players in to replace less talented players you cannot guarantee that the result will be better. How do you know that the star will slide in fine taking over a grinder's spot? You just don't know... Well, I guess the Pens do know now... Whatever we may say, the fact remains, you cannot buy a Stanley Cup look at the money bags Rangers, always bringing in the big time free-agents and yet never ever coming close to winning it all...

For that reason, I am rather glad that the man at the wheel for the Habs is planning to rebuild his team he is not looking for the quick fix, he's decided to build from the inside...look at the faith he put in the Gallys. How did he know to do that? Well, he worked for the Chicago Blackhawks for years and guess how they won the cup? That's right they built their team from the ground, not by shopping around the other teams' line-ups.





## More Than Just a Piece of Cardboard By Ethan Shippen aka TheBoxBreaker

Dear readers,



As fellow card collectors, I'm sure you guys have been in the same situation that I'm in regularly. People asking: "Why do you want to pay that much money for a card? *It's just a piece of cardboard.*" I shake my head and laugh at those people, and even my best friends don't understand why I collect hockey cards. I'm not surprised, though. Living in a small, non-hockey crazy country like Denmark isn't exactly a hotbed for hockey like Toronto or Montreal, but it's becoming a top 3 sport here. So why are people – who are very familiar with soccer cards – so ignorant when it comes to sports like hockey, baseball, basketball and football?

To me, cards have always been so much more than just pieces of cardboard. I started creating hockey card customs in 2007 when I was on vacation at my grandmother's in Germany. It was a 7-card set, hand-drawn fronts and backs. The set consisted of some of the most popular NHLers from the 2000s, such as Dominik Hasek and Mats Sundin. The name for the set was inspired by two very special (for me at least) brands of hockey cards: 1990-91 Bowman and 2005-06 Upper Deck Ice. The set name was a fusion of those two sets, resulting in the Bowman Ice set. And so it began.



Mario Lemieux card from my first ever custom set, Bowman Ice

Hockey card creating became a huge hobby of mine besides collecting actual Mask cards as well. Some months would consist of me sitting by my desk almost daily and creating new innovations. That's also how my YouTube adventures

started out, finally resulting in Upper Deck contacting me and offering to 'sponsor' me. Wow!

It was then in the Fall of 2008 that I received that package from Upper Deck. After having sent some of my YouTube videos to UD, they contacted me and we stayed in touch. Two very friendly employees, whose names I won't mention here, made this an unforgettable day in my life. I had just come home from the doctor and found out that I indeed should not get a dog until adulthood because of risks for allergy. That was a hit in the stomach, but it was all forgotten after I saw the huge case Upper Deck had sent me. What was in it? A few inserts? T-shirts? Maybe even a box of cards? It turned out I'd be mightily and happily surprised. The case contained a total of five boxes (such as Trilogy and Hot Prospects), a tin of Sweet Shot and lots and lots of jerseys, autographs and patches. And they threw in some Upper Deck apparel as well for good measure. That was a day to remember, and I couldn't believe how something as simple as doing what I loved to do could lead to something so extraordinary.

If you guys feel like watching the sponsor package video, here it is. Please bear in mind that English is my third language and, well... I was only 12 years old in the video, so my articulation in the video is... unique, eh?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZimT0T6h398>



The 2012-13 Signature Masks set

I began creating customs on my computer in the summer of 2011, and ended up creating many more sets. Then I had a cool idea in the summer of 2012. I wanted to create a custom set, but taken to the next level, a bit better than the previous ones. Living in Denmark, there's only one professional hockey league here, but it's a pretty good one... and the goalies wear some great masks. I wanted to create a set of Danish masks, but there were almost no good pictures of those masks to be found on the internet. The solution? I could try to meet up with the goalies when they were in town playing for/against my local team. This would ensure the best possible angles on the photo as well. I also decided to bring transparent, measured stickers for the goalies to sign them while I took pictures of their masks. I could then later attach these sticker autographs to the cards after they had been printed out. Yes, even *custom* cards feature sticker autographs now, haha!

Fast forward to today, I had no idea how big of a success the whole project would be, a process I called 'The Signature Masks Project'. The success rate was 13/13 goalies (some





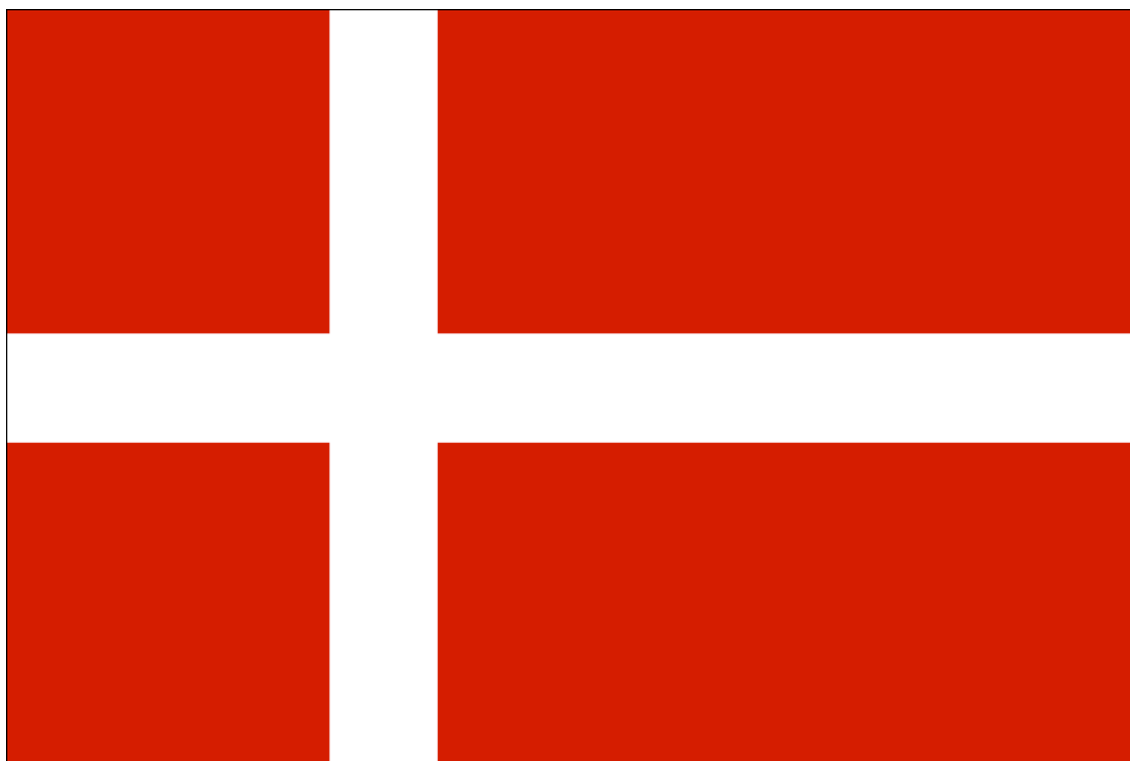
goalies didn't make the final checklist) and 48 different pictures were taken.

So cards are just pieces of cardboard? Yeah, right. It's more than cardboard. It's card collecting. It's in our hearts and minds because we love it, because we're passionate about it. Whilst busting packs, trading some cards and expanding collections we meet new people who showcase generosity, happiness and fellow interests. We as collectors aren't just part of a hobby, we *are* the hobby.

No one knows what the future is going to bring, but as long as we as collectors show passion and determination, well, the future of this hobby is going to be bright. Judging by the great amount of dedicated members on Sports Card Forum willing to be a part of the game, I think that the future of this hobby has never looked brighter.

Sincerely,

Ethan





## My View of the Current State of Trading and a Possible Solution

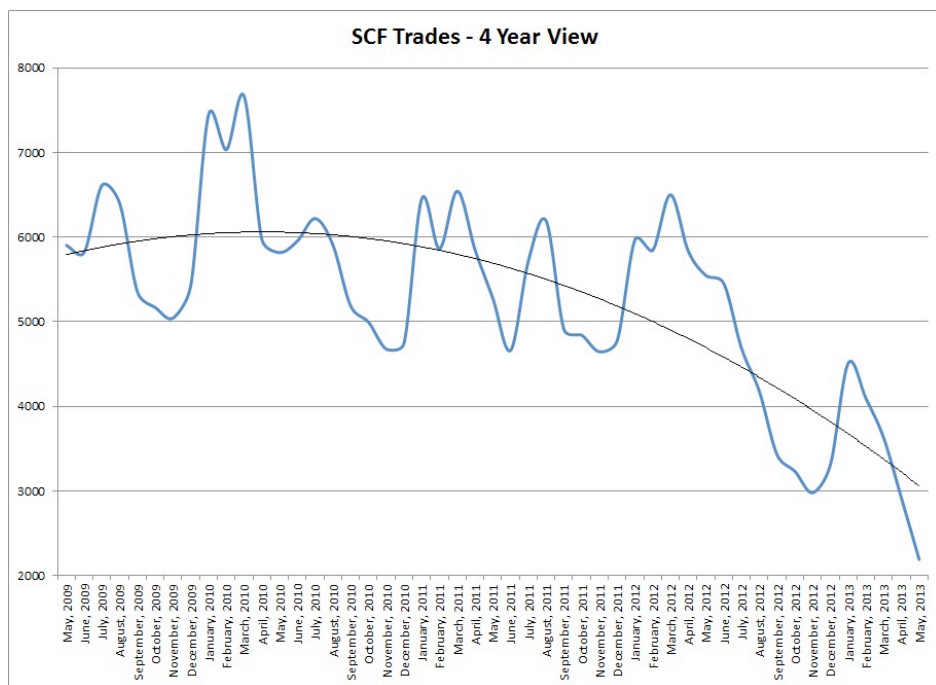
By Scott Kozlowski aka Scottkoz

It has been quite a bit of time since I last penned an article for Sports Card Forum. A lot has changed for me during the last year. My family moved into our dream home north of Niagara Falls, NY. It has a ton to offer, outdoor concerts during the summer months galore, festivals, country living and one of the best school districts in Western New York, just in time for Olivia to start kindergarten in the fall. It did come with a price.

That price was having to own 2 houses for nearly 8 months. This price caused me to sell most of my collection and take time away from the hobby. It is a decision that I do not regret at all!! After all, this is a hobby and would make that decision again if needed. With this said, I'm happy to be back in at least a mode of being able to buy again.

Since I have returned, I noticed a couple of things immediately. First, was the number of new people that have joined SCF and seem to be active in the community; it is good to see that the hobby is alive and well. The second item though is a bit more troublesome. It seems it has become a bit tougher to reach a deal.

My initial thought that it was me, not having a lot of items to work with since having to move most of my collection. But upon another look at the SCF transaction figures for May, 2013, there have just under 2200 total completed transactions (2191) for the month of May as of May 28, 2013. While this seems like a nice, healthy number, you would have to go back to November of 2007 to see a number this low (2125).



I took a bit of deeper dive into this, thinking that this is an anomaly and it's just a quiet month. It is not a quiet month, rather a downward trend in transactions. The following graph is a 4 year look at the number of Completed Transactions on SCF.

Several items stick out to me from this chart:

- \* Januarys see an upward change in the number of trades from December
- \* Septembers see the largest drop in the number of trades from August
- \* Julys usually see a upward change, except for 2012, when the decline becomes quite apparent

I cannot begin to think about every potential issue that could be causing this trend; however, some of the issues that I see contributing to this decline in activity include lockouts in 3 of the 4 major North American sports, cost, both in shipping and new product and finally, us as members of the community.





1) Since 2011, fans of the NFL, NBA and NHL have all suffered through a lockout. While the NFL lockout did not seem to have an impact to the hobby, the NBA and NHL lockouts had significant impacts to the hobby. In both cases, rookie cards from the lockout seasons were tolled into the next year, NBA rookies from 2011-12 were in 2012-13 products and NHL rookies from 2012-13 are tolled to the 2013-14 releases.

The residual effects of the lockouts have been a loss of people that were collecting, become upset with the sports, thus causing them to lose interest and not being active in the hobby or leaving the hobby altogether.

2) As a hockey collector primarily, the cost of shipping from the Buffalo Area to Canada has nearly quadrupled in the past 18 months!

Today, it costs a member that ships to Canada \$6.55 to send a 1 or 2 ounce package to Canada and jumps to \$7.35 to send a 3 ounce package (it is a bit cheaper to create the labels online). Prior to January 27th, 2013, that same 1 ounce package would cost \$3.15 to send to Canada; .15 cents for each additional ounce. This is a 108% increase!

Prior to this most recent increase, I was paying \$1.50-\$1.75 to send a 1 ounce package to Canada in the summer of 2011. All totaled, this is a 436% increase in shipping to Canada alone over the last 2 years! I will not even attempt to analyze the cost to Europe, but that is not pretty either.

3) When you talk about cost, we have to add into this the price of new product releases. Regardless of the sport(s) you collect, this hobby is not cheap and does require some disposable income in order to purchase packs, boxes or cases. A couple of examples of how costs can play a part in people not having the available coin in order to open something are with the cost of products such as The Cup and Bowman Jumbo.

In 2007-08, I was paying \$300/USD for a tin of The Cup locally in the Buffalo area. Now, that similar 5-6 card tin of The Cup is closer to \$500/USD per tin! A 66% increase in the retail price and zero guarantee that the cards that you potentially will have 66% more value in trading.

The second example has to do with the cost of Bowman Baseball, specifically the Jumbo (HTA) boxes (although you can trace the cost of hobby packs as well) seems to always jump in price after the initial release. Currently, you cannot find a box of Bowman Jumbos for less than \$210/USD. The initial price for this same product was around \$160-\$170/USD a box. It is not as a severe change in price as it just discussed with The Cup, but a 20% variance has an impact to a potential buyer, especially if they do not see the value in the product. Because there seems to be fewer products being opened by the average collector, it lends to people having less inventory to potentially trade/sell.

4) Finally, we need to look at ourselves as collectors. Since the prices of most new products can be cost prohibitive for most members, people tend to think how the disposable income that we do have is spent on the hobby. Thus, I find that people look to other sources in getting their cards, such as via eBay, Sports Card Direct, COMC and other outlets in order to get the cards that they want for their collections without having to break the bank.

This is actually a smart option for the majority of collectors; it helps to minimize their costs, while staying active in the hobby.



I think that a combination of all 4 points are contributing to the decline of trading that is done on SCF, especially when you combine all of the points relating to cost. Is there something that can be done to remedy this? I'm not 100% sure what can be done, short of a change in SCF policy to allow for in-person trading to be counted toward completed trades (Rule 6.14).

I understand the complications of allowing for in-person trading to be allowed, including manipulation of an individual feedback score. However, if SCF were to partner with local hobby shops to allow members to count a single trade from that trade night toward their feedback score, it would could actually generate more interest in SCF and also start to potentially see an upswing of the more "traditional" type of online trading.

Ask yourself this question, does it really matters how or where the trade is made? If the deal is made at SCF or at an SCF sanctioned event, it should count.

These are the issues that I can see from my vantage point.







## A Gentleman Takes his Final Bow By Matt Goldberg aka Rivera42

How does one choose a favorite player? After all, the majority of us are fans of numerous sports and even a variety of teams. Scattered among these menagerie of teams are certain players that stand out, even transcending their chosen sport. Some might be flashy and outspoken, starring in numerous commercials and needing to be in the limelight. Shaq is the first athlete that comes to mind, and personifies this scenario. The man was one of the best players to ever step foot onto the hardwood and his personality matched his huge stature. He was a rapper (or at least attempted to be), starred in movies, had/has his own TV shows and who can forget “Kazaam”. I would consider Shaq to be on one end of the spectrum, while at the complete other end is a man known as “The Sandman”, number 42, Mariano Rivera.



As a kid born in the mid 80s, the Yankees were unwatchable. They were the modern day Mets. A complete failure of a franchise and their glory days of years past felt like another lifetime. Then things changed in 1995. Although the season didn’t end the way Yankees fans had hoped, they were finally going in the right direction. At that time I was only 10 or 11 and didn’t have a “favorite” baseball player. All of my friends had “favorite” players, and I really could not make up my mind who I wanted to anoint with this honor. Slowly Paul O’Neill became the player I idolized. This guy had everything, he was a fierce competitor, a true warrior who played the game with integrity and toughness that was unmatched. Around the same time I began noticing Mariano Rivera.

The Mariano to Wetteland connection was a joy to watch. Even in 1996 I knew Mo was special, he had an indescribable “it” factor that gave fans confidence that this guy would come in and get the job done. After John Wetteland left, Rivera took over the closer duties. He was so dominant the game really became 7 or 8 innings, other teams knew once Mo ran out from the bullpen it was over. As a fan, the final outs of a close game were always the most stressful. Even my mom, who was a casual baseball fan at best, knew that when number 42 was out there we could breathe a sigh of relief (no pun intended). We could rest assured that the Yankees would maintain the lead and win the game. Of course there were times when this was not the case, as in a certain playoff game against Cleveland and in 2001 against Arizona.

Statistics speak for themselves and nobody can deny that Mariano Rivera is the greatest closer to ever play the game. However, there is more to becoming a true icon in the sports world than just stats. There are countless players who were



excellent, even legendary, but they never were revered and praised as much as Mariano. Of course I do not know him personally, I had the pleasure of meeting Mo once and he was terrific. Very mild mannered, friendly, and humble. Exactly the way I would have expected him to be. There seemed to be no differences between the gentleman we see take the mound and the man I had the honor of meeting off the field. Over the course of such a long and storied career there has not been one negative story about Mariano Rivera. No scandals, no failed HGH tests, just a clean record and playing the game the right way. In my opinion we have seen the perfect athlete, did his job better than anyone else, did it with quietly and with dignity.

We all know the saying “good things don’t last forever”, although I wish he could pitch forever it is not reality. As this is his last season Mariano is putting up amazing numbers and showing no signs of age. A legend should make his exit graceful, while still being able to show the world what made him great. Did we really need to see Willie Mays on the Mets or Patrick Ewing on the Sonics and Magic? There is nothing better and more rewarding than to see my favorite player, Mariano Rivera leave the game on his terms and as one of the last true gentleman in the sport. Personifying the number 42 on his back, just as the late Jackie Robinson had so many years prior, with 100% pure class. All Mariano fans can agree we are sad to see him go, but are glad he came.







## My Grandmother's Boyfriend

By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert



On May 20, 2013, one of the most special, caring, and important people I will ever know, Theresa Agro, my grandmother, “Me-Ma”, passed away. Me-Ma was a profound influence on my life, and, oddly enough, on my love for baseball and the New York Mets.

Little does he know, but in a way, today is a sad day for David Wright. You see, back in 2005, my grandmother started a relationship with David. He became her boyfriend. Charmed by his good looks, but thrilled more with his prowess at the plate, David Wright gave Me-Ma someone to cheer for again on her beloved Mets. Every time he got a big hit, or made a diving catch, she would always say

the same thing: “Did you see my boyfriend? Did you see him do that?” I only wish she was in better health to have seen him in this year’s World Baseball Classic, performing so well, some gave him the nickname Captain America. On Monday, David lost a potential suitor.

Me-Ma’s love affair with the Mets, and eventually Mr. Wright, started way back in the late 60s. Many Mets and future Mets lived within a few miles of her, in Westchester, NY. She corresponded with Art Shamsky, and any other of the Mets who would come by his house. I still have the signed card she got, personalized, to me. She was a long time jeweler in White Plains, and other ballplayers would stop in, and she would strike up conversations with them, too. Through and through, to the end, Me-Ma was a Mets fan.

In a family full of Yankees fans, there were a few of us who stuck out, but none more so than Me-Ma, and her sister, my Aunt Lou. They were both fervent Mets fans, and would talk on the phone after games, often heatedly, about their



performance on the field. Me-Ma always said the Mets gave her “agita”, and looking at their record in her life time, it’s not hard to see why. She was a fan through the mostly dismal 60s, the almost always dreadful 70s, and of course the eventful and flashy 80s, which is where I come in the picture.

One of, if not THE first baseball memory of mine, is sitting on her couch, watching Darryl Strawberry and the 1986 Mets. Me-Ma LOVED those late-80s Mets, with Darryl, Doc, Gary Carter, Bobby Ojeda (she called him Bobby Agita, of course), and Lee Mazzilli, the Italian superstar. It was those memories of watching games with her that turned this kid born and raised in Los Angeles into a lifelong Mets fan. Every time Me-Ma and I talked during baseball season, one of the first things that would come up would be our Metropolitan. She was able to see many more games than I, as I was in L.A. I was never sure if this was a good thing or not for her stress level, because the conversation always started with, “Did you see what they did last night?”

What were they thinking?”

In 2000, Me-Ma and I talked before, during, or after every single game of the World Series. Needless to say, Armando Benitez was never a favorite of hers. Few things brought her more joy recently, however, than watching her boyfriend, David Wright. He was, in her eyes, the perfect Met. He was good looking, a good person, and a good player, and that was really all she needed in a suitor. No matter that the relationship was a bit one-sided (he never did take her on a date...), she loved her David, and her Mets.

Just last month, I visited her in the hospital, and it was obvious her health was not good. She was in and out of it, as I would imagine







many are at the age of 93, and we had very few conversations, none of which lasted very long. There was, of course, the one moment she was with it that the Mets came up. I was telling her about what else I had planned during my stay in New York. My primary reason, of course, was to see and spend time with her. Weeks ago, when I planned the trip, I looked to see if my Mets were home, and of course they were. It was only a few days before the game, however, that I realized I would be able to see Matt Harvey throw against Steven Strasburg!

I told Me-Ma that I was going to the game, and even as out of it as she was, she looked me dead in the eye and told me, "I hope they win!" True to the end, Me-Ma was a Mets fan.

Thank you, Me-Ma, for being my grandmother, and the greatest fan the Mets ever had.





## Around the Rink

By RGM81 aka Richard McAdam



The Final Four contenders for the 2013 Stanley Cup have been decided, and the Conference Finals are now underway! The match ups this year are some of the most even we've ever been treated to seeing, and the result should be some of the finest hockey that fans have seen in some time. Pittsburgh/Boston and Chicago/Los Angeles are truly marquee matches in the current NHL landscape – combined, they are the four most recent winners of the Stanley Cup. For all the talk of parity in the NHL and the desire to have a level playing field for all teams, the old saying that you can't stop talent rings true here. You see 26 pretenders, and 4 truly elite teams in today's environment. These teams have everything an organization needs to be successful, and it would not be a surprise to see any of them win this year's Championship.

With my beloved Canadiens 2012-13 season long completed now, I don't really have a stake in who wins, but naturally I have a preference to see one team lose, and that is of course the Boston Bruins. That rivalry burns as hot as ever, and I hope that the Penguins are able to make work of the Bruins in the Eastern Finals. It will be a hotly contested series, and the speed and offensive prowess of the mighty Penguins will run into the physical presence and underrated talent of the Bruins. Pittsburgh's confidence is running high, having scored four or more goals in nine of their eleven contests through the first two rounds. With that type of firepower, all they need from Tomas Vokoun is to keep his goals-against average around the 3.00 mark and the team should be successful. Tuukka Rask and the mighty Boston blue line corps, led by Zdeno Chara, will prove a tough test for Crosby, Malkin, Iginla, Neal, and company, and this will make for a great series. My prediction is that we'll see the Penguins advance in 6 games.

Out in the West, we see the reigning defending Stanley Cup Champion Los Angeles Kings taking on the Chicago Blackhawks. The Hawks survived a real scare against Detroit, having to overcome a 3-1 series deficit that put into serious jeopardy the tremendous regular season they enjoyed that vaulted them to the President's Trophy. They'll be looking to have a strong start at home against the Kings, who have looked every bit the role of champion in these playoffs. Jonathan Quick has once again been phenomenal in the post-season, and will look to earn a return trip to the Finals, further solidifying his place as one of the NHL's elite goalies. The teams match up against each other well, and like the East Finals, this series should be a gem. Expect to see a lot of low-scoring, hard-hitting action from Chicago and LA. My prediction is the Kings in 6 after stealing one of the first two games on the road.

That would set up a Pittsburgh-LA Finals – should that be the case, I do believe that we will see the Kings repeat as Stanley Cup Champions. For all of Pittsburgh's firepower, their Achilles Heel remains the goaltending position, which we have seen so many times be the difference in the playoffs. Quick is a better goalie than either Vokoun or Marc-Andre Fleury, and his remarkable play should be the key factor in allowing the Kings to be the first back-to-back Cup winners since the 1997 and 1998 Detroit Red Wings.



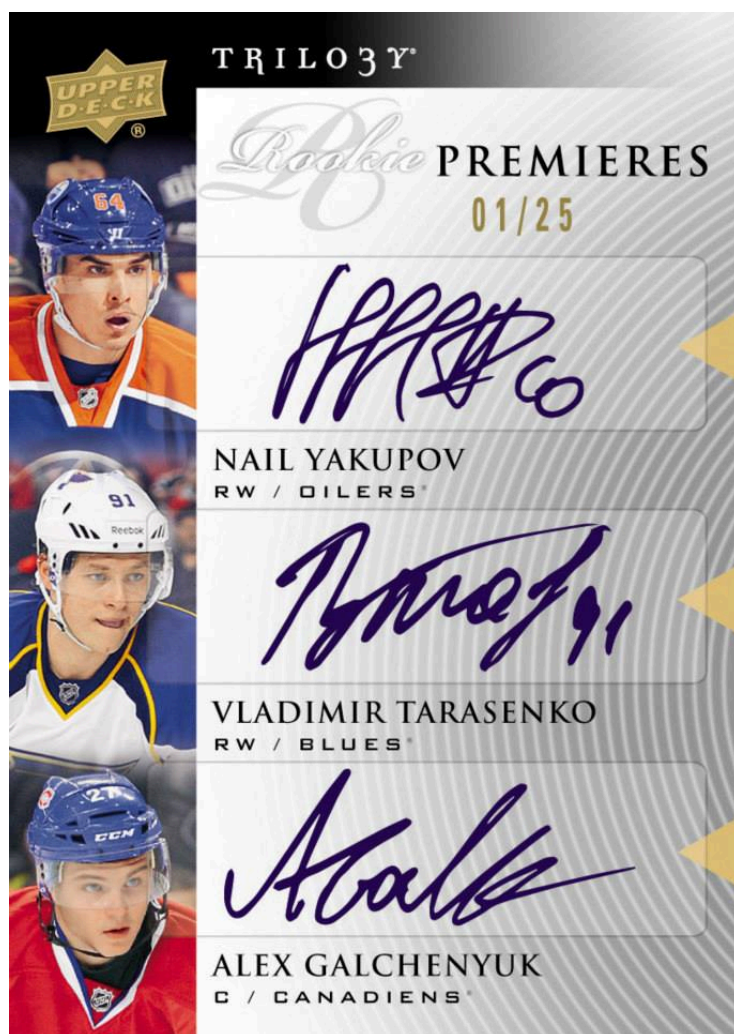


Moving towards some hobby talk, June is shaping up to be a month that kicks the hobby back into high gear. After lengthy layoffs between product releases, both Upper Deck and Panini have a feature release this month, with UD releasing the always-popular SP Authentic while Panini puts out Rookie Anthology. Collectors will be buzzing for both releases, and look for a lot of breaks around the boards that highlight Future Watch Auto Rookies, the hockey debut of Prizm, Sign of the Times autos of legends & current stars, Rookie and Veteran Silhouettes, and much more. Not to be outdone, In The Game will also have the first draft set released in the

hobby in a decade when they put out 2013 Draft Prospects. Collectors will have the opportunity to score hard-signed autographs of Memorial Cup Champions Nathan MacKinnon, Jonathan Drouin, and Zachary Fucale of the Halifax Mooseheads, as well as potential 2013 #1 overall pick Seth Jones. Look also for a lot of great memorabilia from this release of present, past, and future top picks.

Of course, with the dawn of summer comes the dawn of the 2013-14 release calendar. The much-anticipated Double Rookie Class will finally see the light of day, as the return of Upper Deck Trilogy brings the first rookie card appearances of the hottest new stars that debuted in the 2013 season. Calder Trophy candidates Brendan Gallagher, Cory Conacher, and Jonathan Huberdeau, as well as top draft selections Nail Yakupov and Alex Galchenyuk, will get their first licensed cards, and these will be hotly pursued items. The newly-overhauled Trilogy, now a high-end release, will bring with it three tiers of autographed RCs, on-card puck autos, and numerous multi-player memorabilia cards. Just in time for summer, the hobby's about to get red hot!

That's all for this month – we'll see you around the boards!





## The Lions of Winter Triumphant – Hockey’s Greatest Champions By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

When the topic of the greatest championship team in the history of our favourite sports was raised by the editor of this fine magazine, my response to her was simply, “Should I write about the Habs dynasty that won five straight Stanley Cups or just the 1976-77 Canadiens?” Obviously there is a bit of a bias involved coming from this writer to favour *le bleu-blanc-rouge* in this type of discussion, but the facts speak for themselves when it comes to the subject. The Canadiens dynasties of the 1950s to the 1970s had some of the greatest players in the history of the game, and what defined their greatness were not merely their individual prowess but their ability to consistently win at the highest levels of competition.

There were, in reality, three different dynasties in Montreal—the teams of the late 50s and the decade of the 70s are more prominent, but so often overlooked is the Habs squad of the 1960’s that very nearly won five straight championships, thwarted only by the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1967. Much as it seems surreal that a 60-goal scorer like Steve Shutt is often overlooked in discussions of individual Canadiens greatness, so too is it odd that the Canadiens of the 1960’s are referred to as the “forgotten dynasty” in the team’s history. This is what makes it so difficult to say which Championship edition of the Habs stands the test of time as the greatest ever.



This is not to suggest that there aren’t other teams whose championship resumes aren’t worthy of mention, far from it. The great teams of the New York Islanders of the early 1980’s, the Oilers throughout that decade, or the Detroit Red Wings of the late 1990’s could all put forward candidates that would merit serious discussion. Those teams were the class of the NHL in their period. The likes of Trottier/Bossy/Gilles or Gretzky/Messier/Kurri formed the offensive core of teams with explosive firepower, while the all-around excellence of the Red Wings under the leadership of Steve Yzerman gets those clubs into the discussion. But while those teams did enjoy considerable success and deserve numerous platitudes, there is still one club that stands above all the others: the Club de Hockey Canadien of 1959-60.

For this writer, the decision really did come down to the team that won the last of five straight Cups or the team of 76-77 that steamrolled the entire NHL en route to its second of four straight titles. You could make the argument for either side, really, and not be wrong. The latter was a team that lost only 8 regular season games and 2 post-season games. The backup goalie, Michel Larocque, had more wins (19) than the Detroit Red Wings (16) in the regular season. The club lost one game after January 17<sup>th</sup>. Larry Robinson finished the season an astonishing +120 while finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in team scoring with 85 points. Guy Lafleur scored 56 goals and won the Art Ross Trophy. Ken Dryden’s GAA of 1.55 and 4 shutouts in 14 post season games were just a symptom of his excellence. Truly, this was a powerhouse club that was hell-bent on not just winning, but demonstrating that they were the best ever. Many younger Canadiens fans and hockey people in general will point to this team as the greatest ever, and with the evidence above it’s not hard to see why.

However, what makes the 1959-60 Canadiens just a slight cut above the rest is that it was the peak of the era of the Flying Frenchmen. When one looks at the Canadiens as a cultural icon in the province of Quebec, it is this team that

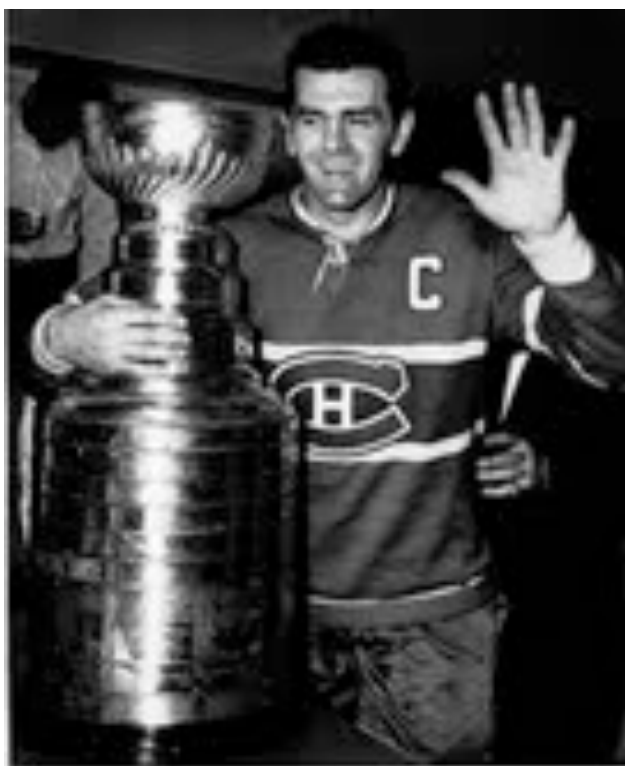




defines that lofty status. Far removed from the era in which the team would have to decide between “being French, or being successful” as explained by Ken Dryden in his fantastic tome, *The Game*, the Canadiens of their first great dynasty were successful *and* French simultaneously. The list of names on that team: Maurice Richard, Jean Beliveau, Henri Richard, Jacques Plante, Marcel Bonin, Boom Boom Geoffrion, Jean-Guy Talbot, Claude Provost, Andre Pronovost, and on and on represented the plateau of Frank Selke’s work to build a powerhouse team with homegrown and developed talent. When one thinks of the standard of excellence set by the Canadiens, and the ongoing desire to do it in a fashion that has that unique French Canadian quality to it, it is because of this great dynasty.

In the six-team NHL of the era, the Canadiens were dominant – this season was the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that the team would make an appearance in the Cup Finals – and stood considerably higher in the standings than the other Original Six clubs. That year, the Canadiens finished first overall, their 92 points a 13-point lead over the second place Maple Leafs. The team leader in scoring that year was Jean Beliveau, who was in his element with 34 goals and 40 assists, good for 74 points, one more than Maurice’s younger brother Henri, who was emerging as a dynamic offensive weapon for the team.

This was truly a team of superstars. Of the 23 men on the roster of the 1959-60 Canadiens, seven have had their numbers retired by the team. Nine (including coach Toe Blake) are in the Hockey Hall of Fame. Many of these players had been around for all of the previous four years of championship seasons, and knowing that Richard was retiring, they were all determined to win a fifth consecutive Cup. Many of them would go on to win many more Cups on the next great dynasty —by the end of their careers, Jean Beliveau and Henri Richard would both see their names on that great trophy more than 10 times, and play central roles in all of them.



Ever since the infamous suspension of Maurice Richard in 1955, which cost him the scoring title and deprived the Canadiens of their captain and best player, The Rocket was a man possessed. Though he didn’t have the same scoring touch of his prime years he was nevertheless the ultimate competitor, primed to win and focused solely on championships. Indeed, following his return from that suspension, the Canadiens never lost the Stanley Cup with Maurice on the roster. In his final season, Richard was more of an inspiration than a top-line contributor, finishing with 19 goals and adding 16 assists. He scored only once in the playoffs, in Game 3 of the Finals against Toronto.

The playoffs were a victory march for the Canadiens. They were, in a word, unbeatable. Literally. The Habs did not lose a single game in the 1960 post-season, sweeping both Chicago and Toronto, usually winning the games by significant margins. In the eight games played, Jacques Plante had three shutouts, while the offence provided four or more goals on six occasions. There was absolutely no doubt about the Canadiens success, no margin for the vanquished to have claimed that with a couple bounces things may have gone their way. That is a key

factor in establishing a truly great Cup Champion from a team that emerged victorious after scratching and clawing their



way through the playoffs. The Habs crushed their opponents. No drama. No nail-biting. No possibility of the series turning or slipping away at any point. Just winning.

What follows is an excerpt from the book *Lions in Winter*, written by Allan Turowetz and Chrys Goyens, on the subject of how close that Canadiens dynasty was to actually winning three more championships, and of course the idea being turned on its head:

If Canadiens fans could change history with a deflection here, a judicious referee's ruling there, could not the same imaginary happenstance have befallen them with unfortunate results during their fable five-year run? Not quite. In those five years, Montreal was taken to a sixth game final only once (1957-58) winning three of the finals in five games and the other in four. That left little room for the fortuitous circumstance of a deflected puck or disallowed goal.

This gives the reader an idea of just how dominant that team was, the prodigious work of Frank Selke after his arrival in



Montreal to turn a moribund franchise into the greatest dynasty in hockey history. The cast of all-star players, the supporting cast, the coaching, the developmental system, all of it was his product. In 1959-60, it was the pinnacle of excellence. When the fans of the Canadiens were asked in 1984 to select the club's all-time roster, five of the spots were reserved for players on the 1959-60 team: Richard, Beliveau, Dickie Moore, Doug Harvey, and Plante (the other was Larry Robinson). During the team's Centennial celebrations in 2009, Richard, Beliveau, and Harvey retained those positions—some goalie named Roy bumped Plante while Moore slipped down to fifth. The championship record, which will never be equalled, was a fitting way for the greatest player in Canadiens history to retire. The perfect opportunity to pass the torch on to Jean Beliveau. For Selke himself, who would be forced into retirement by Molson's policies, he could be fully confident in turning over the reins of the team to Sam Pollock, who would go on to carve out his own legacy in Habs lore.

Truly, there is no team on a par with the 1959-60 Canadiens. The greatest dynasty in its greatest season, there is no higher accolade for the club to earn.







## The Hendrick Motorsports Dynasty

By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy



A dynasty in sports never starts out easy nor does it continue down the path of likewise travel. It is tested with events, hardships, and failures only to rise back up to its perch of dominance. Often a dynasty is created by a great player-a Bill Russell, a Michael Jordan, or a great coach: Dean Smith, Red Auerbach, Phil Jackson, Bill Walsh, John Wooden. In auto racing, the driver and crew chief combination act as the player and coach with the pit crew and engineers being the supporting cast of players to make a successful team. However in auto

racing, the car owner is the overseer and the creator of the dynasty. He supplies the necessary means and organization for his assembled talent to succeed. In racing an owner does not sit in his luxury box away from the action, he is often integrated in it. Many current car owners have been highly successful and had their own runs at a so-called dynasty but only one man has the right to lay claim to that over the last 25 years of the sport, and that man is Rick Hendrick.

A Chevy man who was becoming successful in the car business in the early 1980s, Hendrick decided to go racing and follow his dream. A driver himself for some time Hendrick soon realized his strength was in people and organization and not driving racecars. A small team called All Star Racing was formed. Struggles soon followed. Going into the Martinsville race of 1984 Hendrick was about ready to fold up shop and move on from his dream. Then driver Geoff Bodine and crew chief Harry Hyde pulled off an upset win for the upstart team, a sponsor was found, and as they say the rest is history.

Over the next decade Hendrick would slowly ascend to the top of the sport. His talent for finding the right people and sponsors in order to become successful is what would propel him. Every year Hendrick's pool of talent got greater. Drivers like Tim Richmond, Darrell Waltrip, Ken Schrader, Terry Labonte, and Ricky Rudd would all help grow the team considerably. As of 1993 however Hendrick still had no championships in Nascar's elite series to show for his hard work. Hendrick would assemble an upstart team in 1993 under the guidance of an engineering mind in crew chief Ray Evernham. His driver would be young gun Jeff Gordon, who had torn up the Nascar Busch Series the year before. Right out of the gate the duo were fast but also young. Gordon was prone to mistakes but as they say in racing you cannot teach speed. By 1994 the young team was ready for their breakout.

Dale Earnhardt was entering 1994 as a six-time Cup champion and the best driver in the series. He knew along with most of the sport that the young Gordon was soon going to be a pain in his quest for more. Earnhardt prevailed in 1994 for his 7<sup>th</sup> title, but Gordon was hot on his heels having won his first two career races-the Coca Cola 600 and the inaugural Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis. By 1995 there was a new team on top of the heap.

Rick Hendrick would watch in 1995 as his young team dethroned Earnhardt for their first championship. In 1996 Gordon would be beaten by veteran Hendrick teammate Terry Labonte for the title. In 1997 and 1998 Gordon and the 24 team were unbeatable. Hendrick motorsports dominated the sport in a route of the titles.





However as most dynasties do Hendrick would endure some down years. Ray Evernham would leave to start a program for Dodge, breaking up the chemistry of Hendrick's team. Although Gordon won a title in 2001 Hendrick endured a few down years.

In 2002 Hendrick would bring a new driver into the fold named Jimmie Johnson and pair him with a crew chief who had trained under Ray Evernham, one Chad Knaus. Hendrick's pairing proved hugely successful with many race victories. The ascension to the top was back on when tragedy would strike the team. In October of 2004 Johnson would win the race at Martinsville only to learn that 10 members of the Hendrick Motorsports family had perished in a plane crash en route to the track. Rick Hendrick's friends and relatives were among those lost, most notably his son Ricky who was following his father's business having won the Busch Series title in 2003 with Brian Vickers after retiring from driving. Hendrick Motorsports would go on to race and win the next week at Atlanta in a highly emotional affair but the title eluded them.

By 2005 it had been 4 years since a championship for Rick Hendrick. His teams came out of the gate strong with Jeff Gordon winning the Daytona 500. Gordon and Johnson battled all year for the title but when it came down to it they again fell short. Tension was high and the Johnson/Knaus pairing was in dire straits. Only Hendrick's ability to organize and manage people kept the successful duo together. By 2006 the dynasty was on the verge of massive success.

For the next 5 years Johnson, Knaus, and Hendrick Motorsports would make a mockery of the competition winning 5 consecutive titles. No one had ever won more than 3 straight. Johnson would fall just short in 2011 and 2012 but he remains the most successful driver on the grid today in most categories. Hendrick's driver line-up of Johnson, Gordon, Dale Earnhardt Jr., and Kasey Kahne is among the strongest in the sport. Hendrick has garnered the fame and fortune from his success but also endured the hardships of life along the way. There is no doubt however that he is the dynasty. He is for drivers want to drive for and people want to work for. The ability to be the best is shown continually. Hendrick Motorsports is a sporting dynasty.

The modern day campus of Hendrick Motorsports is on par with a highly funded college





## 2013 NBA Awards

### By Bryce Doody aka bdoody42

**Coach of the Year** - George Karl. Karl led the Nuggets to a 57-25 record including an amazing 38-3 record at home. The team was extremely young with an average age of less than twenty five years old. The team also lacked a superstar and had no player score more than 17 points a game.

**Most Improved Player**- Paul George. George has gone from a young and promising player to becoming a star this year. He averaged over 17.4 PPG, 7.6 RPG, and 4.7 APG. George also was the only player in the NBA with over 140 steals and 50 blocks. The Pacers are battling the Heat in the conference finals and George is continuing to play like a NBA star.

**Defensive Player of the Year** - Marc Gasol. Gasol was the anchor of one the best defenses in the league this year. Gasol averaged 7.8 RPG, 1.7 BPG and 1.0 SPG. The Grizzlies were best team in the league in opponents points by allowing just 89.3 PPG. Gasol also helped the Grizzlies hold other teams to a .435% shooting percentage which was good for third in the league.

**Sixth Man of the Year** - JR Smith. This season Smith was the Knicks secret weapon off the bench. Smith averaged 18.1 PPG and 5.3 RPG. Smith's 18.1 PPG off the bench was tops in the league. He was the second leading scorer on the Knicks would finished with the second best record in the eastern conference.

**Most Valuable Player** - LeBron James. James was clearly the best overall player this year and was one vote away from becoming a unanimous MVP winner. James lead the Heat to the 66 wins and an amazing 27 game win streak. What was stunning was the efficiency at which he played with. The King scored 26.8 PPH while shooting an amazing .565% from the field. The 26.8 PPG was 4<sup>th</sup> best in the league and his shooting percentage was 5<sup>th</sup> best. He averaged 7.3 APG which was tied for 10<sup>th</sup> best in the league. James also showed great defensive ability by being able to defend multiple positions which help James be named to the NBA all defensive first team.

### Playoff Recap

The playoffs this year have been filled with excitement from young players stepping up to injuries. The Oklahoma City Thunder had title aspirations this season after losing last year in the final, but all that changed when Russell Westbrook knee collided with Patrick Beverley when attempting to call a time out. Westbrook was diagnosed with torn meniscus in his knee and had to sit out the remainder of the playoffs. The Thunder beat the Rockets in the first round, but had no answer for the Grizzlies in second round and lost the series 4-1. The first round series between the Nuggets and Warriors was fast paced and high scoring. The Warriors prevailed with the "Splash Brother s" aka Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson raining outside shoots from everywhere inside half court. The Spurs were waiting for the Warriors after they swept the Lakers in the first round. The Warriors started the series hot and had Spurs fan nervous but the Spurs stepped up on defense and clinched the series in 6. The Western Conference Finals was a somewhat surprise matchup in the eyes of many. The Spurs did a great jump limiting Zach Randolph and Grizzlies on offense and swept the series. The Spurs now are getting rest and waiting for the winner of the Miami Heat Indiana Pacer series.

The eastern conference hasn't had as many upsets and surprised but has been entertaining none the less. The Heat swept the Bucks and beat the injured riddled Bulls in 5 games. The Knicks won a tough 6 game series against the





Celtics and moved on to face the Pacers. The Pacers size with West and Hibbert gave the Knicks fits on the inside. The Knicks perimeter players couldn't hit the three like they were during the regular season and that hurt them big time. The Pacers moved on in six games and face the Heat. After six games the Heat and Pacers have swapped blows and are tied 3-3 and a pivotal game 7 is on Tuesday night. The Pacers size with West and Hibbert has really given the smaller Heat a big problem. LeBron James is the sole reason this series isn't already over including the game 1 overtime buzzer beater he connected on. Game 7 should be a great conclusion to the best playoff series of this year's playoffs.

### **Greatest NBA Championship Team..... EVER**



With the NBA playoffs coming to an end it makes us think of the past champions. The 1995-1996 Bulls did things no team had ever done before or since. The 95-96 season was the first full season after Michael Jordan's first retirement. The Bulls came out ready to return to championship form and were led by Jordan, Scottie Pippen, and Dennis Rodman. The rotation included great role players like Toni Kukoc, Ron Harper, Luc Longley, and Steve Kerr. The Bulls started out on fire going 41-3 to start the season. The cooled down slightly and went 72-10 for the season. They're the only team to win 70 games in a season. They continued the hot streak into the playoffs and went 15-3 and defeated the Seattle Supersonics 4-2. The Bulls won an amazing 87 of 100 games that season. The Bulls won six titles with Jordan and Pippen at the helm but none were as dominate as they were in the 1995-1996 season.

### **Pack/Box Breaks**

**By Jay Weger aka Jay520**

Over the past couple of months there have been several breaks but here are a few of the major products opened by members on the basketball forums.

#### **12-13 SP Authentic**

ronfir got a box of 12-13 SP Authentic to pull hits of By the Letter Signatures of Michael Ray Richardson, Canvas Auto of Antoine Walker, Sign of Times autos of Toni Kukoc and Jim Jackson. 44 Magnum hit a Reggie Miller By the Letter /10 auto from 1 box! lasershow15 bought 6 packs to hit a Michael Jordan auto redemption and also pulled a Kobe Anthology gu 2/8.

#### **12-13 Preferred**

Ljmaya open a box of 12-13 Preferred to get a Pistons booklet and RC Cory Joseph Panini Choice auto 20/49, Charles Jenkins Panini's Choice RC auto 5/10 to go with a SICK Silhouette Anthony Davis 3clr patch auto /25!!! Agent 7o2 got a box to pull a Al Jefferson Prime Silhouette patch redemption to go along with a Tim Duncan booklet. TheTGB busted a box to pull a Bernard James Silhouette rc patch auto and a Rebound booklet of Griffin/Wallace/Rodman/Ilgaukas/O'Neal/Nowitzki/Mutumbo. ronfir opened a box to get a Panini's Choice auto of Spud Webb, Silhouette patch auto of Spencer Hayward, Finals booklet of Jame/Ilgaukas/Varejao/Duncan/Parker/Ginobli and a



Panini's Choice Black auto of Chris Bosh 1/10. wju2004 opened a box to hit a sick Scottie Pippen Silhouette patch auto!!!

### 12-13 Brilliance

44 Magnum got a few loose packs to hit a John Stocton Marks of Brilliance auto /25. JaMarchand2012 got 6 boxes to pull RC autos of Jeff Taylor, Isaiah Thomas Jr., Maurice Harkless, Robert Sacre, Bismack Biyombo and Marcus Teague, Brilliant Beginnings auto of Anthony Davis and redemption of Dion Waiters, Blake Griffin gu, Eric Bledsoe patch, O.J. Mayo Patch to go along with several inserts and rookie cards of Anthony Davis, Kyrie Irving and Damian Lillard. theguru opened 5 boxes to get Marks of Brilliance Signatures of Thabo Sefolosha /25, Michael Cooper /199, Rick Mahorn /199 and Jonathan Bender /199, Brilliant Beginnings Signatures of Andrew Nicholson, Gustavo Ayon, Kenneth Faried and Doron Lamb, Game Time Jerseys Jumbo Swatches of Ty Lawson, Al Jefferson, Tyson Chandler 3 clr patch /25 and Paul Pierce 2 clr patch /25, City To City Jerseys Dual Swatches Ben Gordon 3 clr dual gu to go along with a few inserts and rc of Davis, Irving and Lillard.



### 12-13 Marquee

44 Magnum opened a box of Marquee to get 2 rc autos of Lance Thomas and Donatas Motiejunas to go along with several top rc variations. JaMarchand2012 got a box and a few packs to pull an Anthony Davis rc auto redemption to go along with several top rc variations. ronfir opened several boxes to get rc autos of Miles Plumlee, John Jenkins, Jon Leuer, Kendall Marshall, Reggie Jackson, Andrew Nicholson and others along with Michael Cooper auto and several rc variations with a Kobe Bryant auto redemption being the 1 highlight. leedawg62 got a box to pull autos of Tyler Zeller rc, Bruce Bowen and Chris Kaman with the rc variations of top prospects. blacksheep got autos of Brian Roberts rc, Jordan Crawford and Grant Hill (redemption) amongst the rc variations. McPUG went with a box and got autos of rc Lance Thomas and Kawhi Leonard and Buck Williams with the rc Variations of Davis, Irving and Lillard.







## The NFL's Best Squad By J.R. Lebert aka jrlebert

When it comes to whittling down the best teams in NFL history, or at least the Super Bowl Era (1966-present), certain criteria must be met, at least for this particular author. My guidelines are as follows:

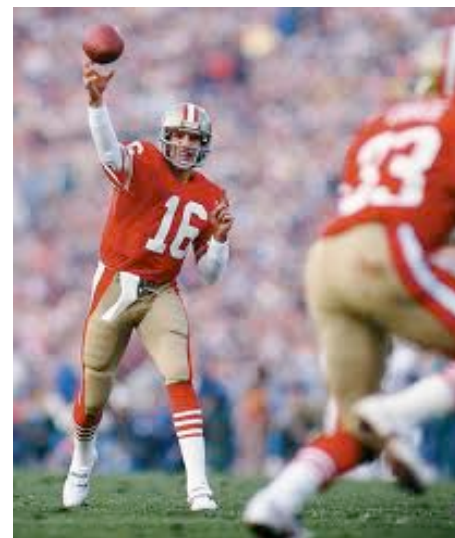
1. You must be a Super Bowl winner. (Simple enough)
2. You must have had two or fewer losses over the course of the season
3. Your team must have ranked in the NFL top 5 in total offense and defense (points/allowed, yards/allowed, or both)
4. Iconic players and coaches are a plus

With these as the factors, my apologies to the 1976 Raiders, 1986 Giants, 1998 Broncos, and Tom Brady's 2003 squad. I also chose to omit the 1984 49ers and the 2004 Patriots, as they fall short in stature to teams from their same era (1989 49ers and 2007 Patriots, respectively). The 1991 Redskins also come up short, based on a lack of HOF depth, with just Darrell Green, Russ Grimm, and Art Monk on the register, and a so-so quarterback, Mark Rypien. So without further ado, here are my picks for the 5 greatest franchises in NFL history.

### 5. 1989 San Francisco 49ers (17-2)

Any team that has the combination of Joe Montana and Jerry Rice is formidable from the start. Adding in a defense that was in the top 5 in both yards and points allowed is what helped push this team over the top and in the top 5 ever. True, they had an equally great 1984 team, but this roster gets the nod based on two things: the addition of the G.O.A.T., Jerry Rice, and depth at QB and on offense.

The offense, of course, starts at QB, and the 1989 49ers had the best in the business. Montana was named NFL MVP, Offensive POY, and also took home the Super Bowl MVP. When he went down with an injury for 3 games, the team didn't miss a beat. HOFer Steve Young took the helm, passed for over 1,000 yards, and led the team to a 3-0 record. Aside from Jerry Rice's eye-popping line of 82-1483-17, leading the league in the latter two categories, he was buoyed by talented veterans Brent Jones, Roger Craig, John Taylor, and OL Guy McIntyre. The defense is where the team loses a few points, as just one player has gained election to the HOF as of 2013, safety Ronnie Lott. DE Charles Haley has a great shot at induction, but after them, the defense leaves a bit to be desired. This team also has the "least iconic" coach of the 5 on this list, George Seifert, although he remains the franchise leader in victories.



### 4. 1978 Pittsburgh Steelers (17-2)

Though their defense comes with a vaunted title, The Steel Curtain, the defense lacked the dominance on the stat sheet to push it further towards the top all-time. Couple that with an offense that was just near, not at, the top in 1978, and a QB who's legacy far outshines his stat line, and the greatest squad in Steelers history sits at #4.

The offense only scored the 5<sup>th</sup> most points, and racked up the 8<sup>th</sup> most yards, in 1978. This would prove to be Terry Bradshaw's finest season as a pro, throwing a career-high 28 TDs, most of which went to his HOF receiving duo of



Lynn Swann and John Stallworth, while winning the AP MVP and Super Bowl MVP awards. Fellow HOFer Franco Harris racked up over 1,000 yards on the ground, and C Mike Webster, one of the greatest ever at his position, anchored the line.

Though the defense led the league in points allowed, this would prove to be the only category they would rank first in. The defense was chock full of HOFers on each level. DB Mel Blount led the secondary, while a pair of Canton-bound LBs shared the backfield and a common first name, Jack Ham, and Jack Lambert. D-lineman L.C. Greenwood and “Mean” Joe Greene led the rush to the quarterback, but despite the dominating name and reputation, they failed to shut out an opponent all season. They do gain extra points for a HOF coach in Chuck Noll.

### 3. 1966 Green Bay Packers (14-2)

The winners of the very first Super Bowl have stood the test of time, and rank as one of the all-time best teams, almost 50 years since their win. They were the NFL’s signature franchise in the 1960’s, winning the NFL Championship or Super Bowl 5 times in 7 years, spanning 1961-1967. Each one of those victories was coached by the iconic Vince Lombardi, and led on the field by the equally-iconic QB Bart Starr. Starr would take home the AP MVP, Super Bowl MVP, and his only AP 1<sup>st</sup> Team selection in 1966. The offense also featured HOF FB Jim Taylor and HB Paul Hornung, who would make 1966 his final season. HOFer Forrest Gregg, and possible future HOFer Jerry Kramer anchored the offensive line, while Carroll Dale, one of the great early TE’s and another possible future HOFer, hauled in the passes.

On defense, the roster reads like a who’s who of the Hall of Fame. There were two HOFers at each level, with DBs Willie Wood and Herb Adderley, LBs Ray Nitschke and Dave Robinson, and linemen Henry Jordan and Willie Davis all looking to make plays. This team may have played in another era, but they would do just fine in the modern game.

### 2. 1972 Miami Dolphins (17-0)

It seems almost blasphemous to have the only undefeated team in NFL history at #2, but it’s not without reason. The offense was very good, leading the NFL in points scored and yards gained, as well as rushing yards and touchdowns rushing. There isn’t one galvanizing star on offense, however, to pull it all together. True, Bob Greise would go on to a HOF career, but he started just 5 games for the Phins that season, and threw as many picks as TDs. The line was led by two other HOFers, C Jim Langer and G Larry Little, and WR Paul Warfield caught the passes. The “star” of the offense in 1972 was FB Larry Csonka, who gained a career high 1,117 yards on the ground, en route to Miami outrushing opponents by over 1,400 yards.

Just one HOFer started on defense for Miami, MLB Nick Buoniconti, although a definite case can be made for SB MVP Jake Scott to have a bust at Canton. The defense pitched three shutouts, and led the NFL in points, yards, and first downs allowed. One of the great coaches, Don Shula, guided this bunch to their undefeated record, but not to the top spot all-time. That spot belongs to...







### 1. 1985 Chicago Bears (17-1)

The 1985 Chicago Bears had it all: Talent, skill, and most of all, swagger. Hall of Famers lined the roster, especially on the defensive end. Arguably the greatest running back ever was in the backfield. A pair of larger-than-life egos led the way, with one quarterbacking the team, and the other providing its signature moment. But above all, there was the Shuffle... the Super Bowl Shuffle.

Though the offense scored just the second most points in 1985, its rushing attack was number one. The Bears led the NFL with 2,761 yards on the ground, and 27 TDs, led by "Sweetness", Walter Payton, who piled up 1,551 yards rushing and another 483 receiving, en route to 11 TDs. None of Payton's 400+ carries would be as memorable as another by a rookie in the Super Bowl, but more on that below. Brash QB Jim McMahon led the passing attack, and though he only started 11 games in 1985, the team won every single one of them.

It was the Bears defense that set them apart from all comers. They led the defense in points, yards, and first downs allowed, interceptions, turnovers, and rushing yards and scores allowed, as well as point differential. They had the Defensive Player of the Year, Mike Singletary, and appropriately, the Super Bowl MVP, Richard Dent. Chicago recorded 6 shutouts, including two in the playoffs, and forced 5+ turnovers six times in 18 games, with a defense led by HOFers Singletary, Dent, and Dan Hampton, as well as AP 1<sup>st</sup> Team selection Steve McMichael.

The Monsters of the Midway were never better than when it counted most, plowing through their 3 playoff games like never before. Their first two playoff games resulted in shutouts, by a combined score of 45-0. Their yards allowed per game decreased in each of their three playoff games, culminating in an absolute beat down of the New England Patriots in the Super Bowl, 46-10, which ran their playoff scoring to 91 points. In that game, they forced 6 turnovers, sacked the QB seven times, once for a safety, and allowed exactly seven yards rushing. The team's memorable moment came in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, when rookie DT William "The Refrigerator" Perry plunged one yard into the end zone for a score, putting the Bears up 44-3. This team was able to make good on their promise three months earlier, they recorded the Super Bowl Shuffle. Add in that this team was coached by the legendary Mike Ditka, and you have the makings of the best team to ever play in the NFL.





## **Baseball's Best Team** **By J. R. Lebert aka jrlebert**

There are certain topics in baseball that will spark heated debate. Best player ever. Best player at their position. Most dominant run. Best single play. Best single game. Perhaps no topic, however, is as highly debated as the best single team of all time. For one year, what team was the most dominant? Who had the most feared lineup, combined with the best pitching? Who ran through their season on the way to a World Series title?

To attempt to answer this debate, I have come up with four simple criteria for determining the greatest team of all-time:

1. You must have won at least 105 games.

Only 24 teams have ever won as many as 105 games in a single season. What makes this even more remarkable is that some of the teams on this list played in fewer than the 162-game season we have now!

2. You must have won the World Series that year.

Winning the World Series is an absolute must. That eliminates some great teams, including the two teams that won more games in the regular season than any others in history, the 2001 Mariners and 1906 Chicago Cubs. Also falling off the list are the 1953 Cleveland Indians and the pitching-laden 1998 Atlanta Braves. From that list of 24, we whittle it down to just 13 teams.

3. Your lineup must have names that will stand the test of time.

When naming your team's roster 20, 50, or even 100 years after, even casual fans should be able to say, "Hey, those guys are good!" This cuts our list down even further. The 1905 New York Giants did have Christy Mathewson, but other than him, odds are the team's most famous player is Archibald "Moonlight" Graham, made famous in the movie *Field of Dreams*. This also cuts the 1909 Pittsburgh Pirates. Most know of Honus Wagner, if not for his play then for his famous tobacco card, but few outside of baseball have heard of the other two HOFers on the team, Vic Willis and Fred Clarke. This also sheds the 1912 Boston Red Sox, 1942 and 1944 St. Louis Cardinals, and, unfortunately for this particular writer, the 1986 New York Mets. This leaves us with 7 teams, and right here is where the going gets tough.

4. Your team must have prolonged success, and must be the most dominant franchise of its era

While we are only judging single seasons, having teams that are dominant over a period of time tends to lend more credence to how dominant, how absolutely great the best team in that era was. This actually eliminates the 1970 Baltimore Orioles. Despite their run of three World Series appearances in a row, they won just won, and lost in 1969 and 1971 as heavy favorites. Also, over that run of success, this team must be "best" or "most dominant" of their era, so that eliminates the 1907 Chicago Cubs, and their HOF infield of Tinker, Evers, and Chance. Just one year earlier, the Cubs had won 116 games, but lost in the World Series. This also jettisons the 1975 Cincinnati Reds. Their 1976 version led the league in almost every offensive category, and despite winning fewer games, seems to be the better of the two "Big Red Machine" teams. And then there were five...

Here are the five teams remaining. There may be a pattern.

1927 New York Yankees. 1932 New York Yankees. 1961 New York Yankees. 1961 New York Yankees. 1998 New York Yankees.





That's right, 5 different Yankees squads, spanning several eras, are this author's choice for who the top 5 teams of all-time are. While we are splitting hairs over which team is best, that *is* the point of the article, so here is how I rank them:

#### 5. 1998 Yankees.

The team with the most regular season wins of any World Series team also ranks as easily the best Yankees squad in 50+ years. The team has three certain HOFers in SS Derek Jeter, closer Mariano Rivera, and manager Joe Torre. Andy Pettitte and Jorge Posada were dominant at their positions for over a decade, and, along with Bernie Williams, are considered borderline HOF candidates, at worst. The team dominated bad teams, going 21-1 vs. Kansas City and Tampa Bay, combined. They won their division by 22 games. Their postseason record was 11-2, and Rivera had the greatest performance by a reliever in World Series history, saving 3 of the four wins to go with his ERA of... zero.

#### 4. 1939 Yankees.

The 1939 team was in the midst of an unprecedented run, even by Yankees standards. They would win the World Series in four consecutive years, from 1936-39, and again in 1941 and 1943. The 1939 year was their best roster, despite it being the last time Lou Gehrig would ever put on pinstripes. They were led by Joe DiMaggio, the 1939 MVP and MLB leader in average at .381. Hall of Famers dotted the roster, including C Bill Dickey, 2B Joe Gordon, and pitchers Red Ruffing and Lefty Gomez. They actually won more games on the road (54) than at home (52), and won 9 more games total than any other team in 1939. They scored an amazing 411 runs more than their opposition, and swept the Reds in the World Series.

#### 3. 1932 Yankees.

The 1932 Yankees are a bit of an exception, and a victim, somewhat, of the greatness of another squad a little further down the list. They are the second team from the same era, but for good reason. This team was an offensive juggernaut, scoring over 1000 runs, and was never shut out during the entire season! They were an incredible 62-15 at home, but actually scored more runs on the road. Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth were their typical incredible selves, as both finished in the top 6 in the MVP race. Hall of Famers Joe Sewell, Tony Lazzeri, Earle Combs and Bill Dickey rounded out the offense, while a Hall of Fame trio of Lefty Gomez, Red Ruffing, and Herb Pennock manned the mound. There would be another Yankees team from this era, however, that would prove to deserve top billing...



#### 2. 1961 Yankees.

From 1955 through 1964, no team was as consistently great as the Bronx Bombers. They played in 9 World Series, winning four, and their best team from that incredible run was easily this 1961 squad. Of course, the 1961 season will forever be remembered as the season in which Babe Ruth's mighty home run record of 60 fell, but not to the odds on favorite, Mickey Mantle. No, while Mickey *did* hit a career high 54 dingers in 1961, he would finish second in both the home run race and the MVP vote to Roger

Maris, who pounded out 61 home runs, 141 RBI, and scored 132 runs. Whitey Ford was the Cy Young Award winner, winning 25 games, a career best, against just 4 losses. It was a combination of career years for these 1961 Yankees that made the roster so formidable. They had a powerhouse two-headed monster at catcher, with All-Star Elston Howard



and Johnny Blanchard combining for 42 HRs and 131 RBI. 1B Moose Skowron notched a career high in HR with 28, and SS Tony Kubek netted career bests in hits, doubles, and runs scored, with both infielders making the All-Star squad. Throw in fellow All-Stars Luis Arroyo, their closer who led MLB in saves, and HOFer Yogi Berra in the outfield, and this roster ranks up there with the all-time best.

#### 1. 1927 Yankees.

The 1927 Yankees never spent one day out of first place for the entire season. Not one. They outscored opponents by 376 runs. They finished 1927 with a 21-1 record vs. the St. Louis Browns. They swept the World Series. And not one of these facts even begins to tell of the greatness of the most feared batting order in MLB history.

The lineup was called Murderer's Row. While they were a bit below average at SS, 3B, and C, their OF performance ranks as one of the best ever. The trio of Bob Muesel, HOFer Earle Combs, and Babe Ruth combined to hit .350 and collect 597 hits. This would be the season Ruth would establish the record for HR's in a season, with 60, to go with 158 runs scored, 164 RBIs, and a .356 average. Lou Gehrig would one up Ruth in average (.373) and RBI (175), and would lead the majors with 52 doubles and 447 total bases on the way to the 1927 MVP. HOFer Tony Lazzeri patrolled second base.

The Yankees scored 130 more runs than any team in baseball, gave up 20 fewer runs, and won 16 more games than any other team in 1927. They led all of baseball in runs, home runs, average, and team ERA, and led their league in hits. On their roster was the 1927 MLB leader in games, doubles, RBI, total bases, runs, home runs, walks, OBP, slugging, OPS+, at bats, plate appearances, triples, ERA, saves, ERA+, and hits/9 innings.

They had the best closer in the game in rookie Wilcy Moore, who had 19 wins to go with his MLB best 13 saves. They had two HOFers at the top of the rotation, with Waite Hoyt, a 22 game winner that year, and Herb Pennock, who won 19. One of their weakest hitters, SS Mark Koenig, went 9 for 18 (.500 average) in the World Series. Heck, even their manager, Miller Huggins, is in the Hall of Fame.

It's hard to argue, but fun to debate, that the 1927 Yankees are baseball's greatest team ever assembled.







## SCF Official Review: 2012 Panini Prizm By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

20 packs per box

6 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$79.99 - \$99.99

### PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Autographs per box
- 3 Prizms per box
- Gold Prizms exclusive to hobby
- USA Baseball inserts include USA Baseball Prizms, USA Baseball Gold Prizms (#d/10) and USA Baseball Signatures Prizms (#d/25), including the first-ever USA Baseball autographs of Mike Trout; Trout's appearance is also his first-ever USA Baseball Card (in addition to autograph
- Among the signers in the USA Baseball Signatures Prizms: Mike Trout, Buster Posey, Andrew McCutchen, Justin Verlander, Clayton Kershaw, Justin Upton and Austin Jackson, among others
- Rookie Prizm Autographs - Signers include Matt Harvey, Yoenis Cespedes, Jarrod Parker, Trevor Bauer and Brett Lawrie among others
- Rookie Relevance Prizms and Rookie Relevance Gold Prizms (#d/10) include Bryce Harper, Trout, Yu Darvish and Wade Miley among others
- Top Prospects Prizms and Top Prospects Gold Prizms (#d/10) include Manny Machado, Jurickson Profar, Dylan Bundy, Wil Myers, Zach Lee, Shelby Miller, Gerrit Cole and Mike Olt
- Key Rookie Cards in the product: Harper, Darvish, Wei-Yen Chin, Will Middlebrooks, Cespedes, Lawrie and Sergio Romo
- Elite Extra Edition Autograph Prizms (#d/25) include Joey Gallo, Mike Zunino, Clint Coulter, Addison Russell, Corey Seager, Courtney Hawkins and David Dahl among others; also find regular Elite Extra Edition Autographs
- Elite Extra Edition Gold Prizms (#d/10) - A 10-player set includes 2012 first-overall draft pick Carlos Correa
- Among non-prospect signers in 2012 Panini Prizm: Cal Ripken Jr., George Brett, Bo Jackson, Rickey Henderson, Ryne Sandberg, Reggie Jackson, Ken Griffey Jr., Don Mattingly, Tony Gwynn, Deion Sanders, Dave Winfield, Bernie Williams, David Wright, Paul Konerko, Joe Nathan, Joe Girardi, Chris Sales and R.A. Dickey among others



### WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ov9-nE-XO6U>

Base - 75/150 (50%)

Rookies - 27/50 (54%)

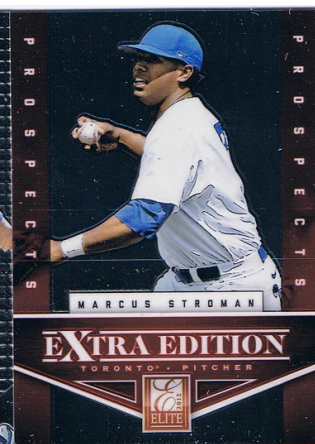
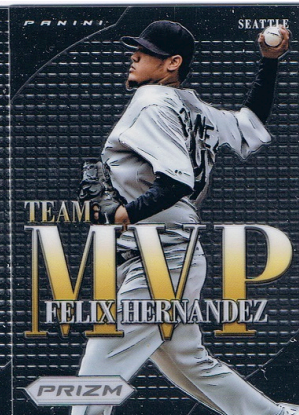
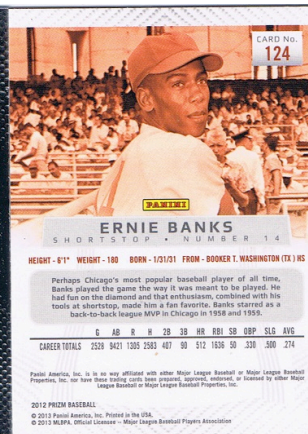
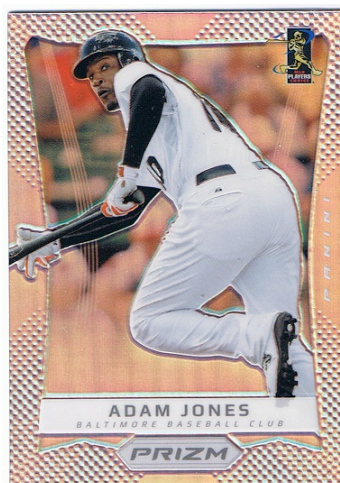
With the success of Prizm in basketball and football, Panini figured a third go-around was in order. And to make the sports card calendar even more confusing to collectors, this is a 2012 product even though it released after the 2013 MLB season started. The base cards are offset by a metallic background on a shiny, foilboard card. The first 150 cards in the set are devoted to current and retired players while the final 50 cards are for rookies. Panini does not have a MLB





license, so they cannot put any team logos on the cards. It seems strange as some of the cards do a great job of hiding this fact, while others are completely noticeable.

- Prizms (3)
- Brilliance (1)
- Dominance (2)
- Extra Edition (1)
- Rookie Relevance (2)
- Team MVP (2)
- Top Prospects (1)
- USA Baseball (4)

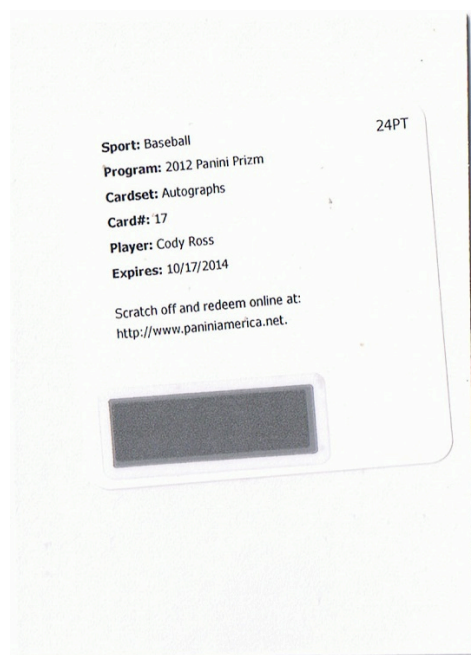


A very popular refractor set among collectors, Prizms have been a hit since appearing in basketball. While some of the interest has cooled with baseball, the hobby-exclusive Gold Prizms (/10) remain a hot commodity. Along with the refractors, you will find a mix of seven insert sets. Almost every pack will yield an insert of some sort as they fall around every 4:5 packs. There is a variety of sets devoted to rookies/prospects and others to veterans/retired players. USA Baseball is honored as well with its own set. I had a quick smile of nostalgia when I saw the Team MVP set as I immediately went back to the days of Donruss Baseball in the late 80s-early 90s and the MVP insert sets.





## Cody Ross Autograph Redemption



## Jarrod Parker Rookie Autograph



Each box will yield two autographs on average. While there are signatures in some of the insert sets, the main set contains 54 autograph subjects among the veterans/legends and 12 rookie subjects. Keep your eyes open for Prizm Refractor versions that are numbered to 25 and less.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 5/5

Fun - 3.5/5

Value - 4/5

Rebuy - 3.5/5

Total - 20/25 (80%)

NPN Information:

Not listed on product

Once again, I'd like to thank our sponsors at Panini for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all of their products, you can check them out at [www.paniniamerica.net](http://www.paniniamerica.net).



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

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

4 packs per box

1 card per pack

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

### PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

#### ROOKIE SILHOUETTES PRIME

- Back again with a new and updated design, Silhouettes were one of Panini's most popular designs for the 2011-12 release year!

#### PANINI'S CHOICE GREEN

What better way to celebrate the double rookie class than with classic Panini designs like Panini's Choice!

#### ROOKIE CROWN ROYALE SIGNATURES

An updated die cut and foil patterns help showcase the top rookies for 2011 and 2012!

#### PANINI SIGNATURES

Look for five different color parallels to collect in Panini Signatures! Red, Green, Blue, Gold and Black!

#### MEMORABILIA BOOKLETS DRAFT11

Look for incredible memorabilia combinations featuring Draft Classes, Positions, Statistics, Career Achievements, Teams, and more!

#### PANINI'S CHOICE BLACK

Look for 1/1 Black Parallels for nearly every autographed card in Preferred!

#### WHAT WE PULLED

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcqybJLG0tg>

Kobe Anthology Box Loader Pack (5 cards)







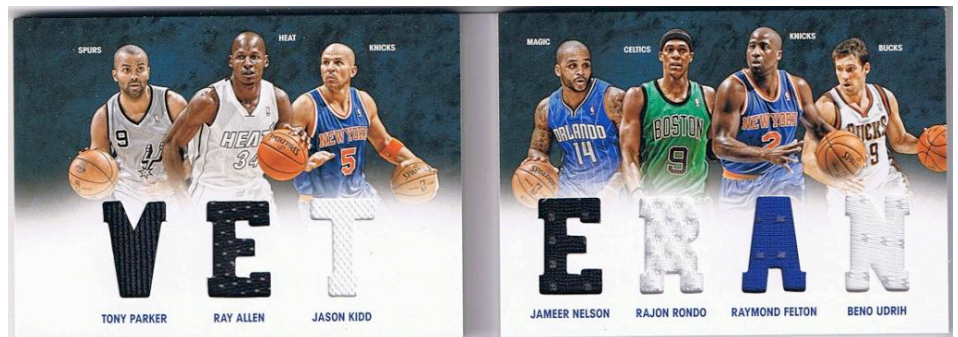
Jason Kidd Panini's Choice Autograph /35



Andrew Nicholson Panini's Choice Autograph /99



Fab Melo Rookie Crown Royale Autograph /99



Veteran Booklet Tony Parker / Ray Allen / Jason Kidd / Jameer Nelson / Rajon Rondo / Raymond Felton / Beno Udrih 7 Jersey /199



Each box of Preferred contains three autographs and one booklet. The booklet will be relic based. The signatures appear to be on-card, which is a huge plus. Like last year, previous Crown Royale designs were used to create the cards. Be on the lookout for the Rookie Silhouette Autographs. The fact there is a 600-card autograph set and a high price point could cause many to walk away.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - N/A  
Design - 4.5/5  
Value - 3.5/5  
Fun - 5/5  
Rebuy - 4/5

Total - 17/20 (85%)

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Panini for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all of their products, you can check them out at [www.paniniamerica.net](http://www.paniniamerica.net).







## SCF Official Review: 2012/13 Panini Marquee

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

20 packs per box

8 cards per pack

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

### PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- A Radical New Product That Delivers Four Different Rookie Sets, Five Autograph Inserts Including 25 Coaches Autographs, 25 Election Night Autographs And A 100-Card Rookie Signatures Insert.

- Find Three Autographs And 35 Rookies In Every Box! Look For Five Unique Rookie Sets Incorporating Diverse And Distinct Printing Technologies!

- Chase Five Exciting Autograph Inserts Featuring Legends, Current Stars, Rookies And The All-New, Coaches And Election Night Signatures!

- Find Five Uniquely Designed Veteran, Rookie And Retired-Player Inserts Including Slam Dunk Legends, Stars Of The Night, All-Rookie Team, Rookie Rivals And Champions!



### PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

#### Rookie Signatures

A Stunning Rookie Autograph Insert Full Of The NBA's Most Exciting Young Playmakers!

#### Stars Of The Night

Seek Out All 20 Of The Games Brightest Stars In This Stunning Insert Printed On Black Holographic Film Board!

#### Slam Dunk Legends

Look For These Amazing Slam Dunk Legends Delivered On The Wild "Swirlorama" Substrate!

#### Champions

Chase All 20 Champions Cards Printed On See-Through Acetate Card-Stock!

#### Election Night Autos

Find All 25 Beautifully Designed On-Card Hall Of Fame Signature Cards!

#### Group III Rookies

Look For 80 Sensational Looking Laser-Cut Rookie Cards!



## WHAT WE PULLED

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xk\\_2PviOOCY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xk_2PviOOCY)

Kobe Anthology Box Loader Pack (5 cards)

Base - 100/100 (100%)

Legends - 8/50 (16%)

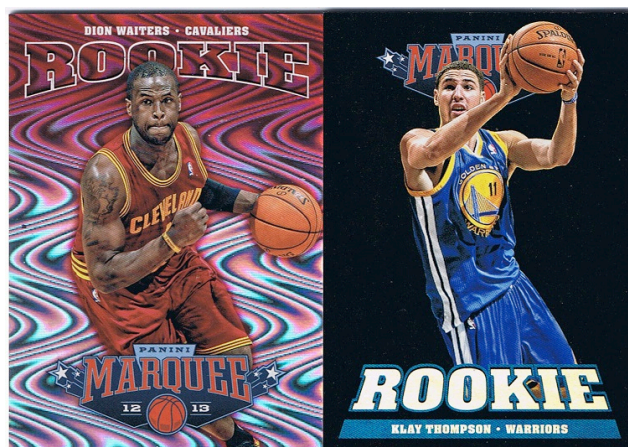
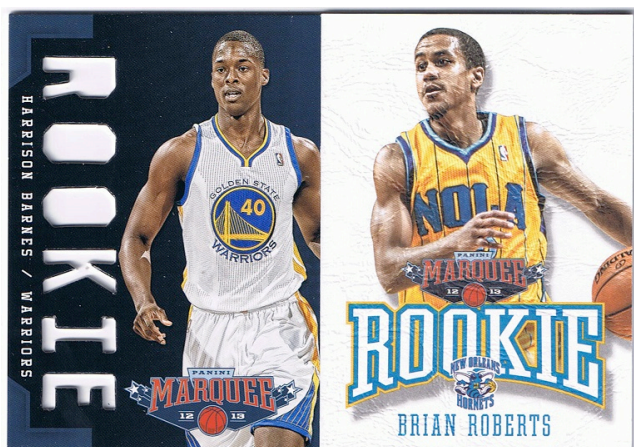
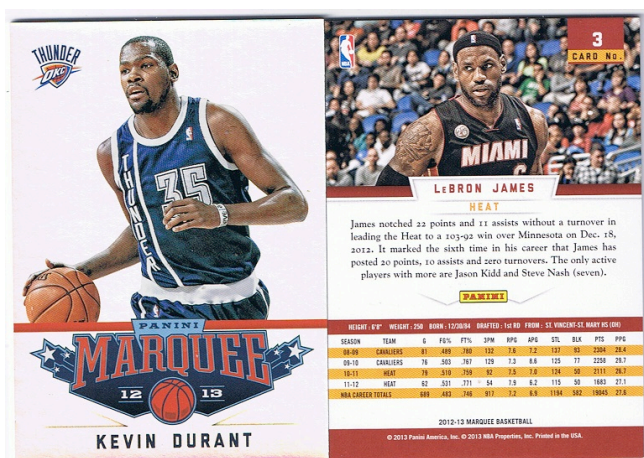
Group 1 Rookies - 9/80 (11.25%)

Group 2 Rookies - 10/80 (12.5%)

Group 3 Rookies - 9/80 (11.25%)

Group 4 Rookies - 2/70 (2.86%)

Group 5 Rookies - 10/80 (12.5%)



Marquee is a new release to the product line for Panini. The full set breaks down to 100 current players, 50 legends and 80 rookies interspersed throughout five rookie levels. That is a total of 540 cards. Very undaunting to say the least. The veterans and legends are showcased on a sturdy, foil board card that gives off a shine. Expect to get all the veterans in one box, but then the collecting work begins.





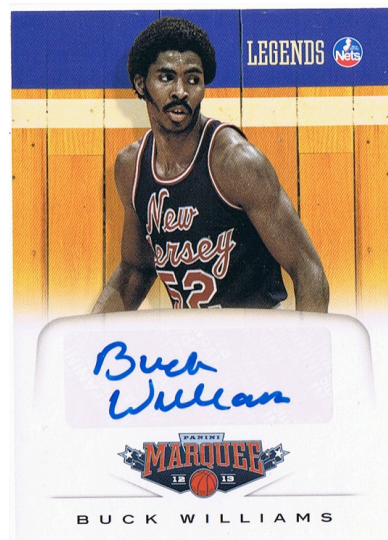
With the double rookie class, it has been an interesting ride to see how Panini would incorporate the rookies this collecting year. In Marquee, they put the wheels into overdrive and essentially created a 390-card rookie set. There are five groups/levels for the rookies. That wouldn't be so bad, except most rookies are featured in every group. So that means a possibility of 5 rookie cards in the set. Which one is the true rookie card? Each group is different from the others in design. Some use sparkle, glitter and swirls, while others use die cuts or see-through windows.

- All Rookie (2)
- Champions (2)
- Slam Dunk Legends (3)
- Stars Of The Night (2)



There are five insert sets available in Marquee, though we only saw four appear in our box. Looks like the decision was to just copy the designs for the various rookie sets and highlights the veterans and legends. The inserts appear approximately 1:2 packs. And on a side note, die cut letters on a non-jersey card are easier to receive damaged or end up damaging. This was noticed during the break.

Buck Williams Legends Autograph



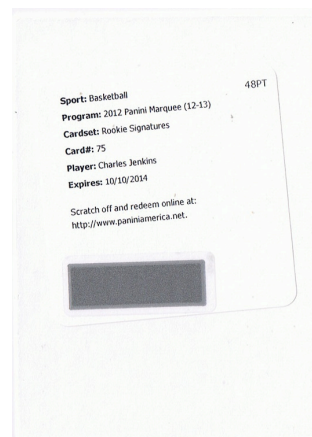




## Kemba Walker Rookie Autograph



## Charles Jenkins Rookie Autograph Redemption



Each box of Marquee will yield three autographs on average. The basic autographs will be the generic unnumbered veterans, legends or rookie signatures. However, there are two chase signature sets. One features the various coaches and will be numbered to 299 or less. The other is called Election Night and will be numbered to 199 or less.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 3/5

Design - 4.5/5

Fun - 3.5/5

Value - 4.25/5

Rebuy - 4/5

Total - 19.25/25 (77%)

## NPN Information

NPN, 2012-13 Panini Marquee Basketball  
5325 FAA Blvd, Suite 100A  
Irving, TX 75061-3601

Limit 2 Request Per Household Mailed Separately

Postmarked By: 6/19/13

Received By: 6/26/13

Canada Skills:  $860 + 694 / 347 \times 853 - 302 = ?$

Once again, I'd like to thank our wonderful sponsors at Panini for giving us the opportunity to open and review this release. For more information on all of their products, check them out today at [www.paniniamerica.net](http://www.paniniamerica.net).



## Card Karma

By Mason Hermann aka antropov14

Two years ago, I sustained an injury that required back surgery to correct it. While recovering in Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto at the age of 14, after surgery, a children's clown entertainer came along with his bag of tricks to keep patients' spirits up, and provide a distraction to the situation at hand. As I was on the older end of patients, I normally wouldn't be entertained by watching a clown, but I was tired and sore, and this was definitely a great way to pass some time. Furthermore, only about five days later I would discover just how important this clown really turned out to be, and the lesson he taught I will remember forever.

The clown came in and did the usual routine, a few jokes, tricks, and put on a little act, but seeing that I was older than most, he had something special up his sleeve for me. I was astounded even in my sleepy state to see him pull out a deck of hockey cards from his bag of tricks and a roll of tape. Now fully attentive, I watched as he showed me how to make a simple wallet out of six cards and clear packaging tape. He let me choose my favourite six cards that he had, and helped me tape it up (the IV in each hand made this a little difficult for me). I was so thrilled at what had just happened I ended up remembering about some hockey cards that I had brought to the hospital from home.

Before I left for Toronto, I ended up going through my collection and sorting out about 150 base and insert cards and packaging them up in groups of 10-12 cards and putting them in my suitcase. I was planning to give them to a patient in a waiting room, or donate them to give out to other children who were to come in the future. I knew this was the perfect opportunity for me to give back and I knew this was a sign. I asked for someone to get the cards from my bag and give them to the clown. He accepted them graciously and was thrilled to add to his stock so that many other kids could be making wallets with him on his rounds in the hospital.

He absolutely made my day, and I know that I also made his. I felt overjoyed at how perfectly this opportunity was presented, and I couldn't have asked for a better outcome.

The real significance and lesson truly comes full circle a few days later, on the way home from Toronto. After staying in hospital for three days, and in a hotel for a few more, I was feeling ready for the car trip home. I had been regularly making small trips around the hotel with my walker, building up my strength again little by little each day. We departed in the morning and proceeded to make our trip home.



Along the way, I knew of a card shop that I had never visited before and I was feeling strong enough to stop in for a few minutes and get moving to stretch my back and legs. Prior to the surgery, I had not been out of the house for two weeks so as not to get sick, as then the surgery would have been cancelled. I was excited to see something new and different. The shop owner was astounded to see how eager I was, even in my condition to be looking around and searching through some cards. After a little time chatting and the purchase of a Rick DiPietro pad save card from ITG (still one of my favorite cards to date) and one pack of SP Authentic, I was ready to get back in the car and head home. I said goodbye to the owner and turned for my walker and was heading out when he called me back.

To my astonishment, he reached down to a stack of 2008-09 UD Series Two





boxes (the full 24 packs), and handed me one. I was speechless. It was a genuine gesture and an extremely generous one at that. I thanked him profusely and then we continued home.

Only later in discussion did the idea hit me. It was only days prior that I had myself given away some cards as a genuine gesture of kindness, and karma was repaying me back. It was the only good reason I could think of. I had only spent \$15 on the pack and card I bought, and the owner ended up giving me a box worth \$40 just like that. I truly see what people mean by karma and I know that even the smallest contributions and kindness will go a long way. This really was an eye opener for me, and it stood out so clearly that I know I will never forget this collecting story. I had a great trip home from there, opening my box in the car, and being thrilled when I pulled a Shanahan jersey card. I still have that card in my collection today, and I will always have that story with me forever.





## How to Collect on a Budget

By Ryan Kalmoe aka SWOWannabe

If you're at all like me and the vast majority of collectors, the only zeros in your checking account balance is what it shows after you've paid your bills for the month. It can be a very difficult to manage your finances, especially with a family. Every expert will agree, however, that the age-old adage "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" holds true in every regard – if at all possible we should have some sort of entertainment budget each month. The problem is that because it's more fun to buy baseball cards than pay insurance premiums, it can be all too easy to overspend on our favorite hobby which can lead to stress and other negative consequences in other aspects of our lives. I'm here to share with you several of my strategies and secrets to enjoying the hobby on a budget. You're certainly welcome to try any and all of them yourself. With a little patience, a little work, and a little luck, you can see your collection grow without seeing your wallet shrink!

### Contests

The first area many people miss out on is the opportunity to win free cards from contests. Contests are held daily in some form throughout the collecting world. Topps frequently holds contests on Twitter, along with several other independent sources. Panini usually has at least one contest a week on their blog. There are contests right here on Sports Card Forum that you can enter. The amount of work required varies, as do the rewards. Topps and Panini, for example, give away memorabilia and autographed cards alongside entire boxes of product. Other contests may have a single card up for grabs, and most commonly here on SCF you can win Card Cash. Check your local card shop, too, as many of them run contests at varying intervals with prizes. My old card shop had a bonus lottery-style drawing at the end of each month for an assortment of packs. My current card shop has Pack Wars on a monthly basis where you can win a wide range of prizes. This month there is an unopened 2012 Black Friday promotional pack, a John Kerry cut autograph, and several other excellent prizes to be won.

Now, entering contests may seem like common sense. However, most people do not enter these contests. Let me reiterate – most people DO NOT ENTER. They dismiss the contest as too much work, or why bother if it is an easy contest because they'll never win? I can't guarantee that you will win if you enter. I *can* guarantee that you **will not win** if you do not enter. I've had varying degrees of success with contests in my short two years of collecting. My best win was a 2012 Elite autograph of Ryan Tannehill with a twist – it was a personal edition of the card unavailable in packs. I've since traded the card for baseball cards, since I don't collect football cards.

This brings me to another point about contests. Just because the prize isn't up your alley doesn't mean you shouldn't enter. I'll enter contests for football, basketball, hockey, even soccer and golf cards. If you manage to win, someone somewhere will likely want the card and you'll be able to trade it for something you *do* collect, or you can sell it to them in an absolute worst-case scenario. You may think it isn't fair to be 'stealing' these sports cards from hobbyists that actually collect that sport. It is a noble thought, but I view myself more as a general sports card collector than just a baseball card collector. Besides, there are plenty of people that collect





more than one sport and it never hurts to have more than just your primary sport to expand the number of hobbyists you're able to trade with.

Contests are the first and easiest way to make your collecting budget go farther. They're hopefully free to enter, and if you enter enough of them you're bound to win eventually. Perseverance is key. Don't get discouraged after a few (or even more than a few) contests that you don't win. While you mathematically can win them all, it is highly unlikely that you will win even the majority of them. Just be excited when you do win and keep entering!

### Free Money

Wait, what? Free money? Yes, if you're on a cardboard budget there are ways to drum up extra revenue without doing much more than your daily activities. You could apply this to any aspect of your life – groceries, clothing, etc. I choose to use the extra money on baseball cards. Most of the extra revenue comes in the form of gift cards to various locations – Amazon.com, Target, etc. If you're on a strict \$20 a month budget for baseball cards, coming up with an extra \$200 a year in gift cards through various programs can really expand your collection in a hurry.

One way to earn these gift cards are through certain **reputable** sites that essentially pay you to be a consumer. There are two that I use and can attest to their legitimacy. Bing.com and Swagbucks both have rewards programs for using their search engines. You won't see instant gratification with them, but with a little bit of presence and perseverance, you can very easily earn a \$5 Amazon gift card each month from those sites. There is the potential to earn much more, but it depends on the amount of effort you put forth. There are other rewards available on Swagbucks, namely Paypal. Who doesn't love Paypal? To date I have personally earned over \$300 in absolutely 100% free gift cards between these two sites. Some months I put a lot of effort into earning more gift cards while other months I've done next to nothing. The sites themselves are fairly self-explanatory as to how to earn their points and how to redeem the points for gift cards. If you're curious how they can do that, they have sponsors that pay them to target advertisements at consumers like you and I. Instead of keeping that revenue for themselves, they share it amongst their users to attract users in the first place. So it is up to you if you want to line Google's pockets or your own for using the internet.

If you're fortunate enough to have a Smartphone, there are a few Apps that will let you earn free gift cards. They vary depending on the platform you are on, but the three that I use on my Android are Shopkicks, Checkpoints, and Nielsen Mobile Rewards. Shopkicks and Checkpoints are apps that will give you points for walking into certain stores with the option to scan items with your smart phone for additional points. Again, it is targeted advertisement with revenue sharing. If you're going to Target anyways, why not earn some gift cards while you're at it? Nielsen Mobile Rewards is another animal altogether. By downloading the program you're consenting to let Nielsen's application collect data on your phone usage for use in their research. If you're not comfortable with that, don't use the application. I'm a pretty easy-going guy and don't mind if someone is observing that I occasionally search the internet for a place to eat, use my map a lot because I get lost, and make about 1 phone call a month. Again, it is up to you, but the program is a lot easier to use since it



just runs in the background and each month you get points as long as it remains installed on your phone. I'm closing in on redeeming for a \$50 Amazon gift card after roughly a year of use.

There are other rewards programs that can be used, I'm just sharing with you a few that I've found and have had success with. I've used one of my hotel loyalty programs to earn gift cards and I could use the points I earn for using my credit card each month. The opportunities are out there, and maybe you already do all of these things but choose to use your gift cards on something other than baseball cards. That's great. If you don't, consider looking into one or all of these programs and before you know it you'll be checking out at Target with a blaster of 2013 Allen and Ginter and having the cashier scan a gift card you just redeemed for on your phone. It is a pretty awesome feeling.

## Budgeting

This one is by far the hardest. Finding a budget and sticking to it. It may be easy for some collectors and more difficult for others. A kid with an allowance each month is going to have a lot easier time sticking to his budget than an adult who could potentially spend a lot of money on cards but needs to practice self-restraint. Figure out what is a reasonable amount of money each month to spend on cards and stick to that. If you have problems sticking to that, consider either using only cash and setting aside a certain amount each month and



when it's gone it is gone, or setting up a completely separate checking account with a fixed amount allocated to it each month. I use a free online checking account that gets a small direct deposit each month. When it is gone, no more cards until next pay day! Also, it can help if you set a goal for yourself and save a portion of your budget each month. If your goal is to purchase a hobby box of a certain product, plan your budget out several months in advance, allocating a certain amount each month towards that box.

You can also look into selling some of your collection if you're looking for creative ways to stretch your budget. Don't buy cards thinking you're going to turn a profit, that's counter to the entire spirit of the hobby. However, if you are lucky enough to pull a nice autograph from a star player and

don't have anyone to trade it to, many people prefer to only deal with monetary transactions for cards. Since the money came from cards, it's only fair to me that I be allowed to put that back into the purchase of more cards. It isn't a strategy I use often, but if I find I have some higher value cards I have a problem trading, I'll just sell them to make it easier. Then I can go and purchase something that I may want.

## Conclusion

So there you have it. This article is by no means the be all, end all of how to collect on a budget. But if you're like me and aren't fortunate enough to be able to afford a case of every new product that comes out, maybe you





can utilize some of these tips to pick up an extra blaster here or there, or win a free card from time to time. Often there isn't a significant time commitment, so you don't have a whole lot to lose, if anything. So give one or all of the aforementioned suggestions a try!\*

**\*Disclaimer:** If you are underaged, do not sign up for or download any of these apps without your parent's consent!

The Ryan Tannehill Personal Edition autograph I won from a contest off of the Knight's Lance, Panini America's official blog.



Part of my entry for the annual Gint-a-Cuffs contest. Alas, I did not win this year. I took second to last. But, you have to enter to win!





## Childhood Jealousy and Peyton

By John Osborne aka lzjp16

Baseball card collecting was a hobby my best friend and I enjoyed. With the limited money we earned weekly doing various chores and begging our parents, we'd head to the local Walmart and splurge on a pack or two of cheap baseball cards. After ripping the packs open, the 1 year old Beckett or Tuff-Stuff came out and we'd search all over for our cards. Eventually, my step-brother, who is a few months younger than me, moved in with my family. We became inseparable and he became my best friend. Eventually he joined the hobby so he could spend more time with me.

He never really got into the hobby but he was always willing to hang out with us and buy a few packs so he wouldn't be left out. One day, we realized that the local K-Mart was closing and we decided to venture inside with our parents. We stumbled upon 3 sealed plastic packages. It was an off brand baseball card company but the packages contained one auto from one of the major sports. They were \$9.99 a piece, which was a lot of money for us, yet somehow we managed to annoy our parents long enough to get them to buy myself, my brother, and my friend a package for each of us.

We got in the car and began trying to pry the plastic apart. Even now, this is a very tough task to do. First my friend opened up his package to view a football auto, no one important but we were happy. My turn, I pull a Jeff Shantz auto, a hockey player for the Calgary Flames. Yes, I still remember the guy's name and what the card looks like, even though this was 10+ years ago. We did not collect hockey nor even watch it. I was pissed. My friend and brother were laughing hysterically at me. I kept trying telling them that my auto of the hockey player was an All-Star, HOF bound, and etc., I had no clue; I just wanted to make myself feel better. Looking at eBay prices now, to say the least, the card is near worthless.



Then, it was my brother's turn. We weren't expecting much, but he pulls a RC Auto of non-other than Mr. Peyton Manning. I was shocked, in awe, and jealous. Little did we know what the card was worth and how good Manning truly would become. We put the card away as soon as we got home and eventually we lost interest in the hobby for a few years. Hard times had fallen on my family and card collecting was the last thing on my mind.

A year or so later, I was rummaging through my brothers stuff when I stumbled upon his Manning auto. A few hours beforehand, we had just gotten into an argument and had a "play" fight since he hit me in the head with a bat, a plastic one. Out of jealousy, anger, and wanting to get even, I ripped the card up and threw

it away like ripping up a detention slip, which I did quite frequently. At the moment, I didn't know what I had just done but I was even, I was happy.

It has been over 10 years since those events and even now, he has no idea what happened to the card. I don't think he remembers having the card at all. He's completely out of the hobby while, I rekindled my passion for the hobby and going stronger than ever, also spending so much more money. My brother later gave me all his cards; I just wish the





Manning was one of them though. Karma, I guess. Even now, I'm going to keep cursing at myself whenever I think about the card of Mr. Manning.

This has to be the biggest blunder and ultimate foolish act I have ever done in my entire life. Not too sure how much the card goes for but it has to bring in a pretty penny. The fact that I was that foolish and stupid still amazes me. Luckily, it didn't harm my relationship with my brother, which meant the world to me when I was younger. When I have kids, hopefully they don't do that to my cards when they're angry at me.

My brother and I kind of lost touch once he moved back to California. We became completely different people and he turned to drugs, partying, and all the bad stuff I try to avoid. I love him with all my heart but I haven't seen him for 2 years. Last time I saw him, I nearly knocked him out for arguing and yelling at my parents. I surely do miss him and hopefully he can turn his life around. One day, when money isn't an issue for me being a college student, I hope I can obtain one of those Manning RC autos, visit him and tell him what happened to the old one. Hopefully this can rekindle our friendship and our bond. Maybe a good laugh is what he needs.





## Prediction de Future: the Next 5 World Series Winners By Tony Gaspar aka YummiestBeef

It's rare gift to be able to predict the future. Many people claim to be able to do it and several people make money by claiming to do it. I am here to tell you that I possess this rare gift of predicting the future. The unfortunate truth however, is that the gift only applies to Major League Baseball.

All right so I didn't predict that the Blue Jays would be in last place in the AL East in mid-May but I did expect the Houston Astros to bring up the rear in the AL West (along with every other baseball fan on Earth). I also predicted that the Minnesota Twins would not be as bad as several 'experts' said they would be and would likely finish the season near .500. Low and behold look where they are now, one game under .500.

Now that you are convinced of my gift of psychic abilities I present to you the winners of the World Series from 2013-2017:

### 2013 World Series Champion: Detroit Tigers



As much as it pains me to do this I have to give the 2013 trophy to the Detroit Tigers. Victor Martinez has looked like a shadow of his former self at the plate this year posting a pathetic .215/.272/.306 clip. Martinez, however, is in his first year back from a torn ACL and is generally considered to be a slow starter. Despite the Tigers' \$50 million dollar man hitting slightly better than a National League pitcher they still rank 1st in both batting average and on-base percentage and 5th in slugging percentage. These stats are good enough to give the Tigers a league best 206 runs scored. While Cabrera is destroying the ball so far this year and we would expect his numbers to drop a little bit we can reasonably expect Victor Martinez to post numbers at least a little closer to his career line of .300/.367/.464. Needless to say this team will put enough runs on the board to win it all. This brings us to the rotation, which possesses arguably the best 1-2-3 lineup in the majors with Verlander-Scherzer-Sanchez all pitching lights out so far this year. Even Doug Fister is getting in on the action. Fister, a control master, has only eight walks

this year and posts a respectable 9 hits per 9 innings. Verlander's strike out numbers have dipped slightly this year and his WHIP has increased but he has maintained a 1.93 ERA so far this season. As long as the other members of the rotation continue to produce decent numbers the offense will be able to carry this team through October and into November.

### 2014 World Series Champion: Los Angeles Dodgers

So here's the deal, Clayton Kershaw is THE BEST PITCHER IN THE MLB and you cannot even have a rational argument about it. Chad Billingsley had season ending surgery this year but should be ready to go in time for the 2014 season. Billingsley had a rather successful 2012 campaign with a 10-9







record and a 3.55 ERA. Add that with Zack Greinke, who was inked to a six year deal for the 2013 season, and Hyun-Jin Ryu, who both have been lights out in their first seasons with the Dodgers this year, and you have the makings of one of the best pitching staffs the MLB has seen in quite some time. As if the pitching isn't enough to win them the World Series their lineup will include; Matt Kemp, Adrian Gonzalez, Carl Crawford, and Andre Ethier. That equates to roughly 120 home runs and arguably the best 2-5 hitters in the National League. In 2014 we should also expect the speedy Dee Gordon, who is tearing up AAA Albuquerque this year, and possibly Yasiel Puig who is expected to hit somewhere between 40-50 million home runs in his career.

## 2015 World Series Champion: Washington Nationals



We all knew they would appear somewhere on this list. After coming close in 2013 and 2014, 2015 will prove to be their year. Ryan Zimmerman has been dealing with injury issues recently but assuming he can stay healthy for the 2015 season he will play a key role in the Nationals' October run. We all know Bryce Harper is an absolute stud, and will be a large reason for the Nats' success. Inking Denard Span to a long-term deal will also be important, as good leadoff hitters are not as prevalent in the league as they once were. Washington will have to had some free-agent hitters though, as they do not possess many solid bats in the minor leagues aside from third-baseman Anthony Rendon. After trading Alex Meyer in the Denard Span deal during the offseason the Nats have also depleted the arms down on the farm. Nathan Karns looks to be a solid pitching prospect who projects as a 3-4 starter. Other than that the Nationals will have to rely on Jordan Zimmerman, Gio Gonzalez, Dan Haren, and Stephen Strasburg. Yeah, I think I'd be okay relying on those guys too.

## 2016 World Series Champion: Baltimore Orioles

A current roster that is brimming with young talent anchored by superstar sluggers Manny Machado and Adam Jones the future looks bright in Baltimore and they may put it together as early as 2014. Jones has improved his stat lines nearly every year and there is no reason to think that the now 27 year old will stop anytime soon. After clubbing 34 dingers in 2012, Jones could easily match these totals for years to come. Along with Adam Jones in the lineup are Manny Machado and Matt Wieters. Machado is an absolute beast on the defensive side of the ball and nearly unmatched in offense. After hitting 7 home runs in 191 at-bats last year Machado has nearly matched that total in 20 less at-bats in 2013. This kid has all the makings of a bonafide superstar at third base. As we know hitting isn't everything in baseball and holy hell have the O's put together a fearsome pitching staff. Chris Tillman and Wei-Yin Chen, the 1-2 starters for Baltimore, are two young pitchers who so far in 2013 have posted WHIPs below 1.3 and a K/9 ratio over 5. The funny thing is these two guys may only be the 3-4 starters in 2016 as Dylan Bundy and Kevin Gausman are both fantastic pitching prospects expected to make an immediate impact in 2014 and beyond.





## 2017 World Series Champion: Minnesota Twins

Before I get called out for riding the bias bus let me just say this; The Twins outfield in 2017 will consist of Aaron Hicks, Byron Buxton, and Oswaldo Arcia. Hicks has struggled at times this year but has also showed flashes of promise as epitomized by his two-homer game in which he made a Torii Hunteresque catch to rob Adam Dunn of a home run. Buxton has reached safely in every game he's played in with Class A Cedar Rapids and Arcia has shown at 22 what the Twins should expect posting a .286/.318/.476 in 23 games at the big league level. Not only that but the Twins will also have Dominican Slugger Miguel Sano who, in all likelihood, will end up at first base with Travis Harrison or Trevor Plouffe anchoring third base. Lest I forget the other portion of the Twins offense Joe Mauer, this team will not have a problem with run support. But with the pitching prospects the Twins have they may not need much run support. Alex Meyer, who came over from Washington in the Denard Span deal is an absolute dominating force on the mound. J.O. Berrios who has posted a fantastic K/BB ratio of 5.4 so far in Class A may challenge Meyer for the title of staff ace. Finally Trevor May projects as an easy 2-3 starter for this staff and assuming some decent free-agent pickups this team could be scary good in 2017.







## Don't Judge the Hobby by its Cover

By Eric Fritz aka emfritz10

Ever since I was a young child, I was always enamored with the sport of basketball. Growing up in Indiana, this shouldn't come as much of a surprise. This is where the "Milan Miracle" took place, where Reggie Miller single-handedly brought New York to its knees, where Indiana University built its legacy, and Butler made two improbable NCAA runs. This is also where my love of basketball cards began in the late 1990s.

There has been a lot of talk about how the hobby has changed, especially in the past 15 years since I began collecting. The proliferation of game-used, ultra rare inserts/autos, and high-end products certainly has influenced a shift in the collecting demographic. My local hobby shop, once dominated by youth, is now mostly comprised of adults at least 30 or older. By no means am I saying this is a bad thing. However, how will the hobby thrive in the future if I (25 years old) am among its youngest consumers?

For my sociology senior thesis in 2010, I decided to investigate if these recent developments (fewer youth in the hobby and the growing number of high-end product offerings) had an effect as to "why" we collect sports trading cards today. I will admit that my previous experience in the hobby made me biased. I hypothesized that most collectors nowadays were only interested in making profit or looking for the latest card from the Beckett "Hot List." I had seen people spend hundreds of dollars on Upper Deck Exquisite or Ultimate Collection, just to lament about how they didn't pull the ultra rare LeBron James auto/patch/refractor/RC/numbered to 10. All the while, they couldn't appreciate the artistic quality of the cards or the fact that they just pulled 15 autographs from some of the most skilled basketball players in the world.

To figure out "why" individuals collect sports trading cards, I traveled to several card shows across the Midwest and researched articles found in newspapers, magazines, and scholarly journals. The vast majority of the sociology and economic literature mentioned how capitalism had influenced everything that was dysfunctional about the industry: including the lawsuits between card companies, the greed of counterfeit operations, how eBay had put card shops out of business and the fact that people often do not collect for the love of the hobby anymore. These findings certainly were in the back of my mind and seemed to confirm my initial hypothesis.

Upon arrival at the first hobby show, I was immediately inundated with flyers, coupons, and business cards of local retail shops. Some of the stores had advertisements with bold lettering and incentives such as "spend 100 dollars and get a free replica jersey." Negotiating with some of the shop owners reminded me of an episode of Pawn Stars. These initial interactions convinced me that the hobby may very well be in serious decline. That was until I encountered a few individuals during my travels.

Toward the end of the first show, I decided to purchase an item for my personal collection. I instantly became fixated on a Topps American Pie John F. Kennedy Jr. card containing remnants of the Berlin Wall and commemorating his 1963 visit there. This historic speech assured the citizens of West Berlin of America's support in their fight against Communism. The card to me was absolutely priceless and I thought it would be cool to show off to my sociology professors!

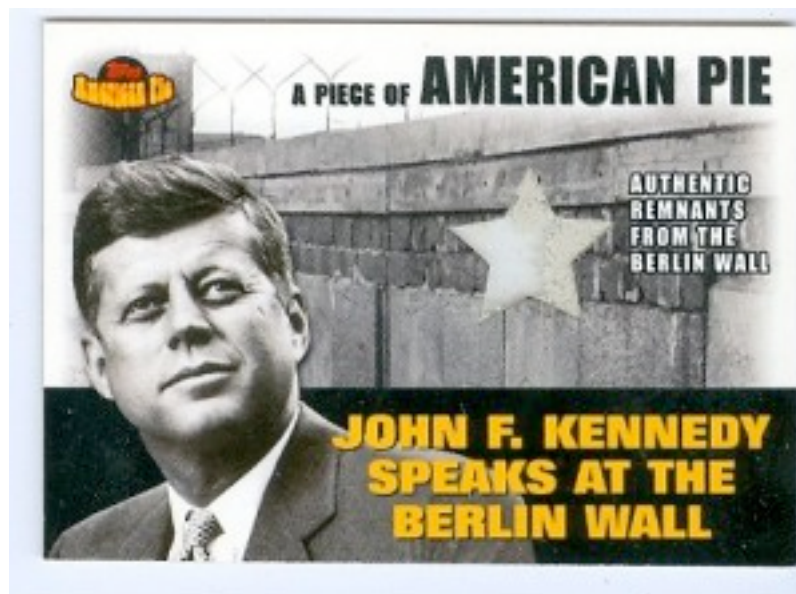
I had observed the owner for most of the day and he appeared cold and calculated on the surface. My initial interaction with him was impersonal and purely-business. After pondering his offer for a few minutes, the owner stepped away and let his son run the store for a little bit. I was touched by what his son told me that day. "My father has two of those [JFK] cards. He really enjoys them and sees them as a piece of history. Instead of selling them both, he held onto one of them to pass on to me when I get older." It was at this moment I realized that I had judged this man too quickly. I labeled him



as a greedy collectibles retailer, but not as a caring father. Shortly after, I witnessed another father and son at a nearby booth. The son was looking to purchase a lot of cards that cost about 10 cents each and had a bag of coins. He asked his son to find the coins he needed to make the purchase and they slowly counted them out together. It was absolutely amazing to see this man use the hobby as a way to teach his son math skills. These two examples demonstrated the power of trading cards to bond a parent and child.

At another show, I began talking to a card trader who was in his early 30s. We negotiated for several minutes about a Danny Granger card and ultimately, I was frustrated that we could not reach a deal. Once again, I assumed this man was just another greedy card trader. I then posed a simple question to him: why do you collect sports trading cards? He replied, “ I’ve been collecting for about ten years now. I buy so much more than I sell and I estimate that in the long run I have probably lost thousands of dollars doing this. But I’m not really concerned with making money, I just love coming to these shows and talking “hobby” with all the other guys.” Once again, I was simply amazed how my first impression was so misguided.

My experiences at these trading card shows taught me a valuable lesson about humanity. Never judge anyone at face value, but rather take a few minutes to get to know them. It is these encounters that have restored my faith in the hobby and make me believe that it will survive long into the future.







## Perfect Shame: Please Stop While You're Ahead

By Rudickulous aka David Rudick



This season has already shown some impressive and promising talents when it comes to pitching in the MLB. Both Anibal Sanchez and Yu Darvish came so amazingly close at achieving greatness, and while Sanchez's game would have been a no hitter, it is still an admirable feat that only a select few have achieved. And yet after watching these two players collapse at the last second, I feel disgusted. There is a feeling in the back of my head that is filling with rage and sickness, a chilling feeling that is hard to describe. The weird thing is that it has nothing to do with the actual games itself, but rather the personalities announcing it.

Maybe it's just me, but events like throwing a perfect game or no-hitter used to be sacred within the sport. In some aspects, they still are.

If the pitcher is near the end of the game and still has history in the balance, you will see the entire team clear away from whatever side of the bench the pitcher is sitting on. The Players respect it, the fans respect it, nearly everybody in the ballpark is aware of what is going on and the protocol behind it. Now if you're a fan of the T.V. show *Scrubs*, you know the infamous episode I am about to reference. In the show, there is an episode where Dr. Cox has all of his



ICU patients still alive for nearly 24 hours. He tells the team of doctors to be ready because they all know what kind of situation they have going on there. This is when the mistake is made; Dr. Elliot Reed asks the question, "What kind of opportunity do we have h..." only to be cut off by doctors. J.D., the protagonist, tries to describe the situation using baseball logic. When questioning what baseball has to do with this situation, Dr. Cox angrily interrupts her, stating the obvious. I use this reference as I think it can connect all of my frustrations to those who don't realize the golden rule of baseball.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-fq2mtoADo>

"You should never, EVER, jinx a pitcher when he has a chance to throw a perfect game!"

Let that last sentence sit for a minute. I emphasis this quote because it seems like the media has simply forgotten about this golden rule. Perhaps they have ignored it altogether. Whatever the reason, it has to stop and stop immediately. Allow me to go back and talk about some examples. Referring to the Yu Darvish perfect game opportunity, I almost immediately removed the ESPN app from my phone. Why do you ask? Because for the entire duration of the game, from the 5<sup>th</sup> inning on, the app kept giving me constant updates about how Yu Darvish was on his way to get a perfect game. I have two problems with this situation. First off, the fifth inning is simply way too soon for that kind of update. When he goes through the lineup twice without giving up a hit, then I can be informed, somewhere around the 7<sup>th</sup> inning seems about right. But this also leads me to problem number two, the update texts itself. I can not emphasize this enough,



PLEASE DO NOT mention the words NO HITTER or PERFECT GAME in any of the texts alerts. It's that simple. Now, it is alright to send an update that would read, "Bottom of the 7<sup>th</sup>, Rangers vs. Cardinals, potential moment in the process," because it let's me know the basics. It tells me what game it is exactly, how late in the contest it is, and that it's a very big event. Sports fans would immediately turn on the game or check ESPN to see stats and witness history all without the possible jinx. On the borderline, but if you wanted to mention the pitcher's name, I would allow it.

What really angered me is the next example though, as I have lost ALL respect for MLB TV. While watching MLB Tonight, hosts Greg Amsinger, Sean Casey, and (possibly) Dan Plesac discussed the Los Angeles Angels vs Los Angeles Dodgers game. This game saw the return of Jared Weaver from the Disabled List. Pitching a fantastic game, he goes into the fifth inning with a no hitter going. Let me repeat that, Weaver completed four innings of work and had allowed zero hits and zero walks. This is when Greg Amsinger decided to chime in and start talking about a perfect game and how incredible it would be because of his return from the DL. I immediately became infuriated. What makes it worse is that Sean Casey, a former player, warns Amsinger not to do that, only to get a reply from him saying how he doesn't know Weaver personally so nobody cares, it can't harm anyone...WRONG. Fans care. I cared. It was too early and too stupid to talk about at that moment. Predictably, one of the first batters in the 5<sup>th</sup> hit a shallow fly which broke the perfect game up.

The point I am trying to make with this article (which may seem like a rant, so my apologies) is that some things are sacred about the game of baseball and with today's media and sports coverage being what it is, we seem to ruin and disgrace the history and heritage of the game. There are positive ways to alert fans about potentially historic moments without providing the jinx, but the way thing are now just feels like a slippery slope to worse things. Baseball is still one of those simple American past times that should be admired and enjoyed. I just hope that I can enjoy some clever banter when watching the game and not have to worry about muting the T.V.





## Merci Becks

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888



Ça devait finir par arriver mais l'annonce est quand même tombée comme un couperet surprenant ce matin. À la fin de la présente saison avec le Paris St-Germain, David Beckham va tirer sa révérence et se retirer de la compétition. En Angleterre, Becks est en quelque sorte une légende vivante.

Bien qu'il ait quitté sa terre natale pour l'Espagne en juillet 2003, il a continué à faire la pluie et le beau temps au sein de la sélection nationale anglaise. La pluie est survenue pendant la coupe du monde de 1998 lorsqu'un carton rouge contre l'Argentine après avoir tenté de se venger suite à une faute

d'un argentin...après son expulsion, l'Angleterre perdit le match en tir de pénalité et fut ainsi éliminé. Le beau temps arriva en 2002 par contre lorsque l'un de ses magistral coup franc fraya son chemin jusque dans le but grec, permettant ainsi à l'Angleterre de se qualifier pour la Coupe du monde de 2002... C'est certain, personne n'oubliera jamais l'incroyable talent de ce milieu de terrain prodigieux et la façon dont lui seul pouvait effectuer le coup franc parfait en donnant exactement la rotation et la vélocité nécessaires pour que le ballon courbe directement dans le coin du but...On en aura vu des ballons contourner des murs et se nicher dans la corniche du but défendu par un gardien impuissant face à une arme si redoutable.

Beckham, c'est aussi un joueur qui aura joué et dominé dans 4 pays différents en passant par 3 des plus grandes ligues du monde. Que ce soit en Premiership, en Liga ou en ligue 1 française, Becks a remporté les grands honneurs. En effet, il aura remporté le championnat anglais 6 fois avec Manchester United, le championnat de la Liga une fois avec le Real Madrid, le championnat MLS 2 fois avec le Galaxy et enfin, celui de la Ligue 1 française avec le Paris-St-Germain, bien qu'il se fut joint à l'équipe vers la fin de la saison, n'ayant à ce jour pris part qu'à 9 matchs.





Non seulement a-t-il mis la main sur plusieurs championnats mais ses statistiques individuelles sont aussi remarquable. En 265 matchs avec les Red Devils de la ligue anglaise, il a amassé 62 buts. Pendant ce temps, il a aussi pris part à 83 joutes de coupe continental, accumulant 15 buts. En Liga, 116 joutes résultèrent en 13 buts ainsi que 2 buts en 28 apparitions lors de match de coupe continental. De l'autre côté de l'océan, Becks a pris part à 98 matchs avec le LA Galaxy récoltant au passage 18 buts. Toutefois, ce n'est pas seulement les buts qui racontent l'histoire de la carrière du numéro 7 de l'équipe d'Angleterre...Non seulement pouvait-il livrer des coups francs parfait, mais il savait aussi fournir des passes parfaites dans la surface de réparation permettant à plusieurs de ses coéquipiers de se payer des buts faciles de belles redirection de tête en encore avec des volées spectaculaires.

Beckham est aussi plus qu'un joueur de soccer...C'est un homme qui fait partie de la culture populaire anglaise, la brillance de ses coups francs ayant été immortalisé dans le titre d'un film à succès (Bend it Like Beckham – avec Kiera Knightley) et même dans le discours du premier ministre anglais dans le film Love Actually. Qui ne se souvient pas du discours chargé d'émotion de Hugh Grant: "We may be a small country but we are a great country, the country of Shakespeare, Sean Connery, Harry Potter...David Beckham's right foot, David Beckham's left foot...". Si vous n'avez jamais vu son entrevue avec Ali G (Sacha Baron Cohen) et Posh Spice, vous avez manqué quelque chose d'hilarant:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P842Tmi6lrc>

Certains diront qu'il était devenu plus une machine à faire de l'argent dernièrement avec les multiples contrats de publicité mais à ceux-là je répondrai que cette année, le salaire que Paris St-Germain lui a consenti fut entièrement remis à des oeuvres de





charité. Aux cyniques qui me diront que c'est simplement parce qu'il a tellement d'argent qu'il n'en a plus besoin, je demanderai de m'expliquer, dans ce cas, pourquoi

M a d o n n a  
d e m a n d e  
encore des prix  
exorbitants à  
ses fans qui  
veulent la voir  
en spectacle.

Le crépuscule  
tombera sous

peu sur la brillante carrière de Beckham, mais une chose est certaine, il demeurera toujours bien présent dans l'esprit des fans de football et par jour de match de l'équipe Anglaise, on pourra toujours voir des maillots numéro 7 portant le nom de Becks dans les rues londoniennes...la carrière est terminée mais la légende demeure bien vivante.



# THE LAST FOUR WINNERS.... WHO WILL REPEAT?

