

COLLECTORS CORNER

OCTOBER 2013



GAME ON



sochi.ru
2014

The Olympic rings logo, consisting of five interlocking rings in blue, yellow, black, green, and red, is positioned to the right of the year "2014".

Word from the Editor	p. 4
Hockey Is Back: a Preview of the 2013-2014 NHL Season	p.5
Missed Opportunities	p. 9
Rinkside	p. 12
Around the Track	p. 16
Where Have all the Rookies Gone?	p. 18
Don Newcombe, Hall of Famer	p. 20
Courtside	p. 22
Review: 2013-2014 UD Trilogy Hockey	p. 28
Review: 2012-2013 UD SP Authentic Hockey	p. 31
Review: 2013 Topps Platinum Football	p. 35
Review: 2013 Topps Heritage Minor League Baseball	p. 40
Review: 2013 Topps Tier One Baseball	p. 44
Review: 2013 Press Pass Showcase	p. 48
MLB Changes	p. 52
Anyone Trading a Mickey Mantle Rookie Card for...	p. 54
Beware of the New Type of Printing	p. 56
Student Athletes	p. 58
Come On You Gunners!	p. 60

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





An Eventful Week By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888

The 2013-2014 NHL season is not even a week old and already there's been plenty of action and discussion topics. Firstly, even though it greatly hurts this Habs' fan pride to say so, the hated Leafs are off to a wonderful start this season. 3 games in, they have a perfect 3-0 record, I guess they're not missing David Clarkson that much and his 10-game suspension may turn out less costly than expected. Another big topic around the league, what's happening in Colorado. Roy had said so right off the bat; Nathan MacKinnon would be spending the season in Denver and 2 games in, we can all see why. Centering the Avs' third line, MacKinnon is working his magic just like he was in the LHJMQ. The man truly has eyes in the back of his head, he's dishing out backward passes right on the stick of his teammates who then only have to bury the puck behind the surprised goaltenders.

MacKinnon is not the only rookie to watch in Colorado however, the bench boss is also a rookie. While Patrick Roy has played numerous NHL seasons as an elite goaltender, this is his first one as a coach and so far, so good. He's led his team to 2 great victories so far although the wins are not the most talked about aspect of his coaching debut. No, what is really getting people talking is his altercation with the Anaheim Ducks' coach on the night of his first game. While Colorado was leading 6-1, Ben Lovejoy got his knee out to hit Nathan MacKinnon who could have been seriously injured. As passionate as ever, Roy handed up in a shouting match with the Ducks' loudmouth, Correy Perry. Boudreau seeing the opposing coach shouting at one of his players, came over and started shouting and pointing at Roy. The latter didn't take kindly to it and yelled straight back while pushing on the glass behind the two teams' benches. The said glass was clearly not built to withstand such abuse and it tipped over. The next day, Roy was fined \$10,000 by the NHL for his outburst. To be honest, I don't think he deserved a fine, I may be biased but I strongly believe that he was just a coach standing up for his players. One way or another though, you got to love the fact that Roy brings the same passion to the game behind the bench as he did in the net.



The last hot topic has been the reappearance of the ever-present "Should fighting be banned from hockey?" question. Why? Well, during the Montreal Canadiens home opener, there was a bout (well there were several in fact) between the Leafs' top enforcer Colton Orr and the heavy-weight the Habs signed this summer, George Parros. The particularity of this fight though was that when Orr fell to the ice as he was holding Parros' jersey, the Habs' player lost his balance and fell face first on the ice. His chin collided with the rink and he was out cold. At that moment, Orr jumped right back to his feet and immediately started to call the medics to the ice, fully aware that his nemesis had suffered a very bad fall. In that instant, Orr earned the respect of Habs' fans nationwide who can appreciate a tough guy who plays by "the code". However the incident still prompted plenty of criticism from the media and the fans alike all questioning whether or not fighting has its place in the game. In all honesty, I think it does. I mean, hockey is by nature a tough sport and while it is regrettable that Parros was injured, he could as easily have been injured by just suffering a bad fall on his own. This kind of incident should not prompt people to want to ban fighting. That's it for this month folks, I hope you will enjoy both the NHL season and this latest edition of Collectors Corner. We'll be back on November 11th with another issue!



Hockey is Back: a Preview of the 2013-14 NHL Season By Richard McAdam aka RGM81

By the time you read this latest issue of Collector's Corner, the 2013-14 NHL regular season will be underway! It's fantastic to have the greatest sport on Earth back in action in the correct month, isn't it? There is a lot to be excited about this year if you're a hockey fan, and this writer is certainly not exempt from feeling pretty positive about his favourite team. There will always be question marks about every roster, and there's a reason that 29 teams every year look to find ways to emulate the most recent champion. Success forces other teams to adapt and modify their strategies to catch up, while the champs themselves have to constantly look to stay ahead of the pack. For an organization run as well as the Chicago Blackhawks, the biggest challenge for them this year is to assert whether they can become the first great dynasty of the 21st century.



There were a lot of changes made in the off-season in the hopes of the respective clubs improving their fortunes. Five teams will begin the 13-14 season with a new head coach: Dallas Eakins takes the reins in Edmonton; Lindy Ruff will begin a new phase of his career in Dallas; Alain Vigneault and John Tortorella switched spots with the Rangers and Canucks; and, most intriguing of all, Patrick Roy begins his NHL head coaching career with the Avalanche. Eakins and Roy inherit clubs that are in the middle of a rebuild that has a lot of promise for the future, as each coaches a young roster filled with explosive offensive talent. It will be interesting to monitor the progress of these five

teams with their new bench bosses to see how well they can adjust to a new set of systems and style of play. Colorado will be a lot of fun to watch, as Roy enjoys an up-tempo style of hockey that emphasis offence. With talents like Matt Duchene, Gabriel Landeskog, and 2013 #1 overall pick Nathan MacKinnon at his disposal, scoring goals should not be a problem in the Mile High City this year.

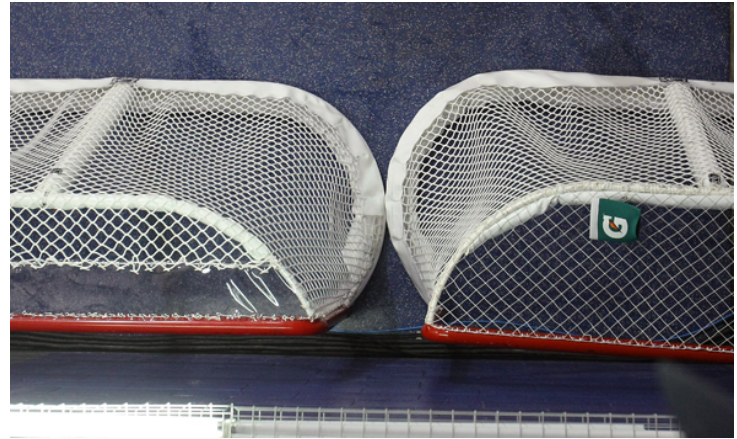
As is the case every year, there was a lot of player personnel movement this past summer. Many unrestricted free agents found new hockey homes in the hopes that they can be a key piece of the puzzle that turns a solid roster into a legitimate Stanley Cup contender. Some players, like Jarome Iginla and Jaromir Jagr, are nearing the twilight years of their respective careers and want one last chance to win it all. Iginla to the Bruins fortifies an already powerful club that loves its power forwards, while Jagr will hope to replace the offensive hole left by the sudden departure of Ilya Kovalchuk in New Jersey. Speaking of the Devils, they addressed their biggest problem—the future between the pipes after Brodeur—at the Draft when they traded for Cory Schneider, who will finally have the opportunity to prove he is a #1 goalie in the NHL. In Montreal, Daniel Brière has finally come home; he enjoyed a solid pre-season and looks to prove his detractors wrong, especially those in Philadelphia where his contract was bought out. That move, of course, allowed the Flyers to sign Vincent Lecavalier (another player coveted by Habs fans) to their club. All of these moves give some fantastic human story lines to the season ahead.

In addition to coaching and player changes, there have also been a couple of significant rule changes that will affect the way the game is played. One move that will hopefully dramatically improve player safety concerns is the introduction of hybrid icing during the preseason, with the players to vote before the season starts whether they want it full-time. This



rule change allows the linesman to blow the play dead on an icing if the defenceman is ahead of any attackers at the defensive zone face-off dot when the puck is iced by the opposing team. With the number of serious injuries sustained by key blueliners in attempts to race for the puck in recent years, this move is long overdue. All through the junior ranks and at the international level, no-touch icing is the norm. It is not “exciting” to see a speedy forward nullify an icing call; there is little added benefit to having a potentially dangerous situation like that in the game, particularly when the stick work sometimes involved can cause players to crash into the boards and break a leg. Hopefully the players will vote to adopt this new hybrid icing rule (and they did a few days after this article was written).

The other two major rule changes revolve around increasing offence and scoring. Goalie equipment has again been modified to cut down on the excessive padding used by some netminders. This may yield more goals through the five hole if goalies less technically proficient, who have used their equipment to mask a weakness down low, aren’t able to adapt in short order. The other change is make the net shallower by four inches. While this may not seem like much, it adds that much extra space for playmakers to create scoring chances using the behind-the-net area as their office. In one pre-season game, Daniel Brière of the Canadiens set up two very nice goals on passes from behind the cage. Wrap-arounds may become more prevalent. With less net area to navigate around, speedy skilled players may be able to get to the far post before the goalie can cover the ground at the goalmouth. Bear in mind that there is no change to the actual size of the goal scoring area; it is still the same four-by-six cage at the front, with no adjustments to the posts or the crossbar. The change may result in some more video reviews as the puck can bounce out of the net faster now with less space available at the back, but goalies don’t have to worry about totally adjusting their mechanics to fit these new changes.



The biggest change to the game we saw over the summer was, of course, the realignment of the division and conference system in the NHL. Not only did a number of teams switch conferences, the playoff format has been changed from the top 8 arrangement that we have seen in use for many years. The realignment will put a heavy emphasis on regional rivalries while also injecting some new life into the regular season. As befits a full 82-game campaign, every team will square off at least once per season, allowing the fans of the game a greater opportunity to see their favourite clubs and players, as well as the game’s very best. While the intra-conference schedule used in 2012-13 provided a lot of intensity, this revamped calendar gives fans much more variety.

The Detroit Red Wings and the Columbus Blue Jackets will begin the newly realigned NHL in the Eastern Conference, while the Winnipeg Jets are moved to the Western Conference. The Wings organization has for many years been requesting this change, as they have faced a very cumbersome travel schedule while situated in the Western Conference, having to go much further than any other team in the League for their road trips to California all the way from Michigan. For Columbus, a move to the East is an opportunity to square off against many more “traditional” market clubs than they have in the past—a move which should also increase their contributions to the always-significant hockey related revenue pool. The Jets going west closes the final bit of their legacy as the Atlanta Thrashers, and drastically reduces their travel expenses as well. Curiously, the realignment has brought about an imbalance in the conference system, with 14 teams in the Western and 16 in the Eastern, a move that may create unfair playoff scenarios but one perhaps made with an eye



towards future expansion to a 32-team NHL (for more on that prospect, see my article in the September issue of Collector's Corner entitled "Is a 32-Team NHL Viable?")

The new conferences and new divisions means changes to the playoff format as well. In the past, the top eight teams in each conference qualified, with the division winners being seeded in the top three spots. Now, the format is a little bit more confusing, as it uses a hybrid model of division and conference standings, but will probably be easy to understand in time and with a little explanation from the NHL come the spring. With the new format, the top three teams in each division automatically qualify. The remaining teams with the two highest points totals in each conference will also make the post-season in "wild card" spots. The division winner with the most points faces the wild card team with the lowest points total, and the other division winner takes on the other wild card team. The second and third seeds from each division square off against each other. This example chart illustrates the way the format works:

Montreal – 100 Points	Pittsburgh – 105 Points
Boston – 97 Points	Washington – 102 Points
Toronto – 93 Points	NY Rangers – 94 Points
Detroit – 92 Points	NY Islanders – 88 Points
Ottawa – 89 Points	Columbus – 83 Points
Buffalo – 79 Points	Philadelphia – 80 Points
Tampa Bay – 70 Points	New Jersey – 66 Points
Florida – 55 Points	Carolina – 62 Points

In this scenario, Detroit and Ottawa would make the playoffs by virtue of having the most points of the remaining 10 teams in the Western Conference after the top three in each division. The first round playoff series would look like this:

Montreal v Detroit	Pittsburgh v Ottawa
Boston v Toronto	Washington v NY Rangers

Hopefully, the new system works well for all teams involved. The race in the West will be all the more heated with only 14 teams in the conference. Depending on whether one conference's teams show dominance over the other, we could see a non-playoff team in the tighter Western Conference with more points than a wild card qualifier in the Eastern Conference that enjoyed the benefit of an additional weak team to play on a regular basis.



One thing that is for certain is that the 2013-14 regular season will be full of twists and surprises. While you can usually count on seeing the usual powerhouse contenders battling it out at the top of their division, there can always be that dark horse team that nobody expects to contend that ends up toppling the apple cart. Few expected Philadelphia to have such a rough season last year, while at the same time not many predicted that the Blue Jackets would be pushing until the final days of the season for a playoff spot. Who will be that team this year?

It wouldn't be a proper season preview without discussing the Olympics at least a little bit. Though it took longer than many expected, the NHL, the NHLPA, the IOC, and the IIHF were able to come to an agreement to allow NHL players to participate at the Games in Sochi in February 2014. The NHL will shut down its operations for those two weeks while the very best players in the world congregate in a best-on-best tournament to determine a new champion. The Vancouver Games of 2010 were arguably the most exciting and riveting we've seen in a generation, and produced a moment for Canadian hockey fans that is on par with Paul Henderson's goal at the end of the 1972 Summit Series. As if Sidney Crosby wasn't already immortalized in this country, scoring the "Golden Goal" cemented his place in the annals of time. This year's edition of the Olympics should be a tremendous tournament, and the host Russian team will be looking to replicate what Canada did on their home soil four years ago. Their team will be comprised of their best available players from the NHL and the KHL, meaning that fans will get to see how Kovalchuk looks after his departure from North America over the summer. Fans in Canada will be prepared for a lot of late nights/early mornings to watch the tournament live—good thing that Tim Horton's Roll Up The Rim contest will be ongoing at the time, eh?

While I'm still not sold on the designs of these jerseys, I do think that a #31 and the name Price on the back will make them look pretty decent...





Missed Opportunities

By Karine Hains aka Pheeb888



Once again this year, the Montreal Canadiens made a stop in Quebec City for a preseason game. This time however, there wasn't a full house at the Colisée Pepsi. I was chatting with a friend who's a die hard Nordiques fan about the game and she told me that this year, the fans were sending the message that they hate the Canadiens and they want their own team. In essence, I think her point was that their heart got broken once again by Bettman who managed to keep the Coyotes in Arizona and that they had enough... I told her I felt like they had missed an opportunity to show how much of a hockey town Quebec City truly is but she didn't see it that way. For her, it sent a clear message that the population wanted the Nordiques back and not the hated Canadiens.

The way I see it, they could have sent a much louder and clearer message by packing the Colisée to the rafters and cheering for the Canes. Imagine if 16 000 Nordiques fans turned up, dressed all in blue and booed the Canadiens relentlessly? Could there have been a bigger message than that? I understand that they want their team back but the bottom line is: it does not exist anymore. If there are ever to get a team back, they have to show that they are a hockey city. What does it accomplish to go to other arenas in the league and make a lot of noise? Not much if you ask me...especially considering that most Nordiques Nation outings are basically just an opportunity to go on an 18 hour bender. And yes, I am speaking from experience having taking part in the trip to Ottawa in February 2012. In the bus at 7.30 AM, plenty of beer bottles were being opened and when the game ended in Ottawa, we had to go by the hospital in Ottawa to pick up a guy who passed out at the game as he was too drunk...Fantastic, point well made Nordiques fan!



But enough about the politics of the NHL return in Quebec, after all, there was still a game played even though only 10 000 fans turned up for it! While the crowd wasn't impressive in numbers, it sure was in decibels. The building got really loud, granted the fact that the Habs notched a 6-0 win probably helped with that but the atmosphere was impressive right from the get go. There were numerous occurrences of "P.K., P.K., P.K.!" from the crowd and poor Mike Komisarek got booed and jeered every single time he picked up the puck. Even though the Habs did not put out a very strong line-up (only 5 regular forwards and 2 regular d-men were playing), the fans were treated to a display of skills and tenacity by the Habs hopefuls. Overall, it was an excellent evening and I'm sure glad I got a ticket even though most people thought it was really overpriced for a preseason game.



In my opinion another opportunity was missed in the preseason, not by the Nordiques fans this time but by Brendan Shanahan, the NHL Director of player safety. How can a man who's main role is to ensure the safety of players react mildly when one of the stars of the league starts using his stick like an axe? In case you do not know what I'm talking about, during the match-up between the Leafs and Sabres, a young Sabre got knocked-out by a Leafs' player and at the next face-off, the Sabres' coach sent out John Scott (a goon in the purest sense of the term) while Randy Carlyle (apparently hoping to diffuse the situation) put out a skill line. The result? Prior to the face-off, Scott made it clear to Kessel that he was going to jump him. When Scott threw his gloves down and charged on Kessel, the latter turned into a lumberjack and started hacking at Scott. A few seconds later, 2 other Leafs jumped on Scott and Kessel skated around him and slashed at his ankles again from the back, while he was clearly not under any danger. This came just a few days after Kessel was involved in what can only be described as a fencing match with former teammate Luke Schenn.

The result? Shanahan handed out a 3 preseason games suspension. Can you really call it a suspension when it's in the preseason? Most stars do not play all preseason games and since they are not officially paid for those games, Kessel will not lose a dime over this. Is it fair? Is it logical? How does that sit with the 10-game suspension which Clarkson got automatically for leaving the bench and getting into the melee? In my view, it makes no sense at all. While he did leave the bench and got involved, he did not hurt or sucker punch anyone so how can this be justified? The way I see it, the NHL disciplinary office has just lost hell of a lot of credibility. I do believe that everyone around the league is reacting pretty much the same way, well, apart from the Leafs of course who are all too happy that they will be able to count on their star forward from the start of the season.

One thing is for sure though, Shanahan has missed heck of an opportunity to show that all players (stars or not) will be treated the same way and that player safety is the chief concern and not keeping the stars on the ice to bring in the money. I feel somewhat sad now that I've written this article, the season is not even started yet and already some major opportunities have been missed...let's hope the regular season will make us forget all about them.





Around the Rink
By RGM81 aka Richard McAdam

Featuring The SCF Hockey Team!

Welcome back NHL! After a fun summer (bit too long for this Habs fan's tastes) it is time to get ready for the 2013-14 NHL season. With a new conference and divisional alignment, new rules, and new faces in new jerseys, there's a lot to prepare for in anticipation of the new campaign. Fortunately we've got you covered, with an extensive primer for the season ahead that will get you up to speed and ready for puck drop.

The hockey forums at SCF have seen some pretty big news in the past couple of weeks, none bigger than the announcement of our Regular Season Pool sponsored by Upper Deck! Our friends at UD have spared no expense and given us two boxes of what will be the hottest product of the season, 2013-14 Upper Deck Series 1, to award to our top two winners. This product will be loaded with the Young Guns of the top members of the vaunted Double Rookie Class, as well as the usual autographs, memorabilia, and other chase inserts. We went the extra mile for this contest and included a lot of bonus content to ensure that it's not some standard hockey pool. There will be trivia, tweaks, and perks added throughout the course of the season to make this a very fun and rewarding experience for SCF members. We hope that you participate!

In addition to that sponsored pool, SCF will also be running two other season-long contests that will knock your socks off with the great prizes to be awarded! The first is our usual Season Long Challenge with a number of sub-contests, and this year we're adding a Guess The Score contest that will run all season long. Prizes? YOU BET! We've got two absolutely stunning cards to award to our winners...take a look at these!

2013-14 ITG Decades The 90's Game Used Patch Silver /3
Patrick Roy – Season Challenge



2012-13 SP Game Used Supreme Sticks /12
Carey Price – Guess The Score



These two prizes are both easy \$100SV cards and we are VERY EXCITED to be able to give these amazing memorabilia pieces away to our valued members. Be sure to get engaged for your chance to win one of these amazing cards! And be sure to check out this season's Show & Tell Contest, which will have a fantastic prize of a Decades The



90's Quad Jersey featuring Dominik Hasek, Steve Yzerman, Theo Fleury, and Owen Nolan limited to just 30 copies. We know that collectors love to collect cards, and it's even better to be able to WIN them!

While contests are getting up and running, so too are the boards for the 2013-14 hobby season. Already we have seen stellar releases from both Panini and Upper Deck, and there is much more to come from those licensees as well as In The Game. This could be one of the best seasons for the hobby in a very long time. We've already had Score, Trilogy, Prizm, and O-Pee-Chee released, and the weeks and months ahead have some amazing offerings for collectors on all parts of the spectrum. Upper Deck will conclude the 2012-13 hobby calendar on October 22nd with their release of The Cup. Promising much more veteran-driven content in past year, UD is delivering not only the established stars of today but also the greatest legends in hockey history in their super-premium high-end release. Collectors can get information about the latest edition of The Cup here: <http://www.sportscardforum.com/threads/1997836-Preview-2012-13-THE-CUP-%28UD-Info-Added-9-27%29>



And here's a pic from the previews that definitely will get people psyched! Imagine getting this card out of your tin break!

Also on the horizon for collectors: Artifacts, Team Canada (look for more from SCF about this release in the near future!), Select, ITG Used, UD1, and in December...Dominion! Like I said previously, this season is going to be amazing for collectors as they will be treated to fantastic products featuring some of the hottest rookies and stars in a long time. If you haven't yet made up your mind which products you want to pursue, make sure to check out the Hockey Card Talk Forums for all the latest information, opinions, and discussions.

With all the excitement surrounding a new season, we hope that our members will remain active and engaged participants in the boards throughout the year. It's a great opportunity for fans to get to interact on the boards and share their enthusiasm—it's nice to be able to do that and not always just be focused on making trades and deals. We also encourage everybody to post up threads with news, discussion topics, and more to share your love of the game. And if you're going to any games this season we definitely want to see

your pictures and live reports. Doesn't matter if it's an NHL, AHL, or CHL game—in fact, if you are at a junior game and see one of the top prospects have a fantastic game, DEFINITELY post about it. There's so many cool things that happen at these games that very few people who aren't there ever hear about. So be sure to get engaged and talk a ton of hockey with us this season!

While the action heats up on the ice and in the hobby, the SCF Staff wants to take some time and space to discuss their predictions for the upcoming season. Our experts answered a PM call put out on a Saturday morning and this is what the Team thinks is going to happen this season. Be sure to bring this up if they get any massively wrong!



	Richard	Chris	Sean	Paul
Atlantic	Montreal	Detroit	Boston	Boston
Metropolitan	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Pacific	LA	LA	Vancouver	LA
Central	Chicago	Chicago	St. Louis	St. Louis
W e s t e r n Conf.	Chicago	Chicago	Vancouver	Vancouver
Eastern Conf.	Montreal	Detroit	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Cup Champ	Montreal	Chicago	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh
Art Ross	Crosby	Stamkos	Crosby	Crosby
Calder	MacKinnon	Toffoli	MacKinnon	Drouin
Norris	Subban	Karlsson	Weber	Pietrangelo
Richard	Stamkos	Stamkos	Yakupov	Stamkos
Vezina	Price	Quick	Luongo	Quick
Gold Medal	Canada	Canada	Canada	USA
	Karine	Ed	Andrew	Andrea
Atlantic	Boston	Boston	Toronto	Boston
Metropolitan	Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh	Washington	Pittsburgh
Pacific	Vancouver	San Jose	LA	Vancouver
Central	Dallas	Chicago	Chicago	Chicago
W e s t e r n Conf.	LA	Chicago	Chicago	Chicago
Eastern Conf.	Pittsburgh	Boston	Pittsburgh	Boston
Cup Champ	Pittsburgh	Chicago	Pittsburgh	Boston
Art Ross	Crosby	Crosby	Stamkos	Crosby
Calder	MacKinnon	MacKinnon	MacKinnon	Drouin
Norris	Letang		Subban	Chara
Richard	Stamkos	Stamkos	Stamkos	Stamkos
Vezina	Luongo	Luongo	Crawford	Rask
Gold Medal	Canada	Canada	Canada	Canada

We think that our fearless leader may have indulged in putting on his *bleu-blanc-rouge* glasses when making those predictions. One of our staffers, raven_creed (Paul, as we know him), gave us a really good breakdown of what he thinks is going to happen this season, so here's his deluxe edition preview of what's ahead!



Atlantic Division Champ: **Boston Bruins** - too much strength at all positions, reliable top-end goaltending, too many players who are familiar with Claude Julien's system, and too many impact players for the rest of the division to overcome. Additions of Iginla and Eriksson will more than make up for the losses of Horton and Seguin, and don't doubt Chara is still at the top of his game, despite his age.

Metropolitan Division Champ: **Pittsburgh Penguins** - finally able to overcome injuries that have plagued them in the past, and with less immediate pressure, the pieces are again in place for the Penguins to dominate in both the regular season and the playoffs, especially if the 1-2 punch of Crosby and Malkin can stay healthy. Their track records would suggest they won't, but I'm going to say they both will. Watch out.

Pacific Division Champ: **Los Angeles Kings** - Watch out for the Sharks (Niemi is very underrated) and expect the Canucks to be there all season long, but with Quick in net, Doughty as the number one defenseman, and perhaps the toughest group of forwards in the league, the Kings have proven themselves to be a premier team over the last few seasons, and will finally convert their dominance to a strong regular season finishing.

Central Division Champ: **St.Louis Blues** - great depth and skill at all positions, a tremendous core of young talent, strong finishes in the last few seasons amongst the other dominant clubs, and with a hunger that will surpass that of division-rivals Chicago Blackhawks, I like the St.Louis Blues to come out of the Central Division, led by newly signed and my pick to win the Norris Trophy this year, Alex Pietrangelo.

Western Conference Champion: **Vancouver Canucks** - I have a funny feeling about Vancouver this year. I think they'll have an up-and-down regular season as they adjust to Torts' style of game, but will find their groove at the right time and work their way right to the finals again. Luongo will prove his naysayers wrong.

Eastern Conference Champion: **Pittsburgh Penguins** - if only because Iginla switched from Pittsburgh to Boston in the off-season, the "Marian Hossa" syndrome will strike, and the Penguins will knock off the Bruins in the conference championships to go on to the finals.

Stanley Cup Champion: **Pittsburgh Penguins** - I have a very strong feeling that it is their year to reign as champions again. They have the team to do it, and I'm saying avoiding big injuries and a resurgence of Marc-Andre Fleury will be the cause.

Art Ross Trophy Winner: **Sidney Crosby** - if I'm predicting he's going to be healthy, it's hard to imagine anyone else winning the Art Ross this year than the best player in the world.

Calder Trophy Winner: After doing some digging to find a list of candidates, a few names stood out. Filip Forsberg in Nashville is a great candidate. A pure goal-scorer who might be needed to score some goals on a team who will be hard to find them all season long. The opportunities could be there, after all, how many other high-end forwards or prospective forward talents do the Predators have? That could work against him if he has to be a one-man show in the effort, though. I am predicting quite confidently that Jarred Tinordi will be the best rookie defenseman in the league this year, and as a Leafs fan, it hurts to admit to such things. However, he's been groomed properly, is a huge, ready, physical guy who will show his physical defensive impact immediately. I already feel sorry for the undersized forward who will



be going into the corners with him this year. He just won't have the offensive numbers to earn the recognition his play will deserve this year. The Habs might have the most underrated D in the league. It's hard not to think that one of Jonathan Druin or Nathan MacKinnon won't win the Calder Trophy this year. Both are highly gifted offensively, possessing the kind of raw talent that shouldn't present any problems for either guy to continue their offensive successes at the NHL level. What's more is that both guys seem to be on the verge of making their respective clubs, and being given ample opportunity to play regular minutes with offensively gifted linemates. In both cases, the recipe seems poised for success. I'm going to go with **Jonathan Druin** here, though, because the buzz has been a lot stronger coming out of the Lightning camp to this point. Every line he's put on he finds chemistry and success. If not with studs like Stamkos and St.Louis, with fellow-up-and-comer Nikita Kucherov, a half-decent sleeper pick to win the Calder in his own right.

Norris Trophy Winner: **Alex Pietrangelo** - he will log the kind of minutes and defensive responsibilities that perennial contenders Drew Doughty, Duncan Keith, Shea Weber, PK Subban, and Zdeno Chara will, but will put up the kind of offensive numbers that lead to Norris Trophies. It isn't common that a player comes back from signing a huge new contract with a career year, but Alex will change that this year.

Richard Trophy Winner: **Steven Stamkos** - perhaps only Crosby, Ovechkin, or Tavares can dethrone the league's reigning goal champ, but even then, who has put the puck in the back of the net more often and with more authority than Stamkos has over the last few seasons? No one, and he's still only 23 years old. That's scary.

Vezina Trophy Winner: **Jonathan Quick** - as good as Lundqvist is, as much as nobody sees Bobrovsky repeating, and as much as I can consider Tuuka Rask, I think Quick will have the wins, the low average and save percentage, and the most reliable strong play from the team in front of him of any of those guys, and I see him taking him his first career Vezina Trophy. It's his time.

Olympic Gold Medal Champions: **Team USA** - The Russians have an edge with the added pressure of playing in their home country for these games, but I still don't like their defense or goaltending enough to take home a gold medal. I think many people underestimate the powerhouse status and dominance of Sweden on the world stage for at least a decade now, and with Lundqvist in net, anything is possible, except that when they won the gold in 2006, they had legends Peter Forsberg, Mats Sundin and Nicklas Lidstrom leading the way. Perhaps not quite their year for a gold. As much as I'd like to see Canada win the gold again, and Crosby's overtime winner isn't all that distant a memory yet, we Canadian fans know already of the question marks surrounding our goaltending situation. There's no doubt Canada should have the best depth at forward and defense, and even though I think the goalie situation is being blown out of proportion, too much attention on it will put too much pressure on the goalies they choose, who will all fail to find their groove as the pressure and revolving goalie carousel (over coaching, if you will) will hurt them in the end. And, when I think back to the 2010 Games in Vancouver, Team USA looked pretty good then, and they were a very young, not-quite-ready team at the time. Fast-forward four years. Their forwards can compete with anyone, and have a great balance of size and speed, and Jonathan Quick, I'm saying, will be the best goalie in the tournament, and will win at least a couple of crucial games on his play alone. The Canadian hockey fan in me is disgusted at my prediction, but I like Team USA to win the gold medal in Sochi at the 2014 Olympic Games.



The Kyle Busch Enigma **By Stephen Taylor aka race crazy**

He is the Red Sox to your Yankees, the bad boy Pistons to Jordan's early Bulls, the Redskins to the Cowboys. He is Nascar's version of a Kobe Bryant or LeBron James - a guy with so much raw talent that everything appears very easy which irritates fans. He has the attitude and ego of a guy who knows he is dang well at his job. He knows he is better than you and he goes out and proves it. This is a man who will soon surpass Richard Petty's 200 overall wins record in Nascar's top three levels of competition. I of am course talking about Kyle Busch.

A rather normal looking guy in his late 20s, Busch is the subject of most Nascar fans' current love/hate driver. Go to any driver introduction and he gets the most varied reaction alongside 5-time Cup champ Jimmie Johnson. Both have in common one factor that makes fans highly dislike them-they win - a lot. Busch already has 18 wins this season across all three series and his usual win total for a common year is in the 20s. This does not count the beatings he inflicts on many a late model driver in big races across the country or whatever else he chooses to run and win in (like Tony Stewart's Prelude to the Dream a few years ago). So what is it about this guy that makes Nascar fans hate him on the same level as many hated Dale Earnhardt or have many fans love him the same way back? Kyle Busch is a curious case for sure and one must examine the many facets of his personality, past, and career to understand how we got to where we are.

Kyle Busch was a known prodigy out of Las Vegas at age 16. His older brother Kurt had got almost instant success driving for Jack Roush so it was natural for Ford and Roush to try out Kyle. The only thing that ever prevented Busch from going full-time for Roush in Nascar's truck series was an age limit. By the time he was 18, one Rick Hendrick had scooped up Busch out of Roush's team to the surprise of many. It was largely Busch's choice since he wanted to distance his own career path from that of his brother, who at this point was making no fans in the sport and had yet to mature. His brother's antics played no favors for the younger Busch who by his first start was already booed and guilty by association.

Kyle proved a quick study racking up wins in a hurry for Mr. Hendrick and, by 2005, he was thrown into the fire of Nascar's highest division. Busch won the Rookie of the Year and 2 races proving he was around to stay. Along the way through 2006 and 2007, Busch became labeled. The young driver probably hated and still hates losing more than anyone else on the circuit-or at least it appears that way in post -race interviews. Busch's utter despise and discontent with 2nd places or "good points days" or his negative attitude towards most anything in racing that is not winning appeals to a lot of fans but also rubs many the wrong way. By 2007 after a victory lane interview bashing the brand new racecar and a fit throwing temper tantrum in the spring race at Texas Mr. Hendrick had had enough. Kyle Busch was being kicked to the curb in favor of Dale Earnhardt Jr. As with what had happened with his brother at Roush Busch's attitude and temper had gotten in the way of his massive talent level-and they would again a few years later.



By 2008, Joe Gibbs Racing was looking to bring some energy back to its flagship #18 car. Since Bobby Labonte had left the team the #18 went through years of struggle. Landing Kyle Busch was a big catch for both them and new manufacturer Toyota. With new, colorful sponsorship from M&M's Busch proved them right immediately, winning in Atlanta



in his 4th start for the team and tearing through the regular season winning 8 races all the while destroying fields in the Joe Gibbs Nationwide Series car on a regular basis. After spinning fan favorite Dale Earnhardt Jr. out of the way at Richmond to try and score the victory NASCAR Nation was largely more infuriated than ever with the younger Busch, who promptly went out the next week and stomped the competition at Darlington, wiping fake tears away in his post-race celebration as the crowd booed mercilessly. If Kyle was winning he did not care.

The 2008 chase was supposed to be Kyle's. It never materialized as from the start, the 18 team and driver faltered. In 2009 and 2010 the same story would put itself seemingly on repeat. Here was the guy who most considered to be the most talented in the sport and he was not performing well come championship time-when it mattered. Busch would win a Nationwide Series title and continue to dismantle fields in the Nationwide and Trucks series while scoring a usual 4 to 6 Cup series wins every year, only to fail come go time. Along the way, Busch struggled with this as the "haters" ate it up. By 2011, the M&M's team come chase time, was again primed, only to have a complete meltdown once again. At Texas Motor Speedway, in the lower tier truck series event Busch was in his eyes done wrong by points leader Ron Hornaday. Busch who was not racing for points was infuriated with the driver of the 33 and smashed him into the wall Days of Thunder style under caution destroying both trucks. NASCAR suspended him for Sunday's Cup Race. Sponsor M&M's was highly irritated. Busch's career was on the rocks.



By 2012, Busch had seemingly matured due to the Texas incident. He displayed one of the all-time great driving performances in the pre-season Bud Shootout at Daytona, saving the car miraculously and making a late charge to win. Busch was happily married, had his own race team, and seemed more content. However there were still issues. Busch had chosen to drive for his own Nationwide team and he was not winning. He was not winning on the Cup side either. Although content away from the track, on it struggles were ever present. Busch missed the chase completely. Again he would not win the championship. But then something happened. Over the final 10 races the #18 team put together a solid campaign priming themselves for the 2013 season. Busch had his confidence back.

2013 has been a comeback year of sorts for the man they call Rowdy. His swagger is back, his constant winning is back, his constant irritation of NASCAR Nation is back (do yourself a favor and go read his back and forth banter with NASCAR fans on Twitter) all the while dragging along the growing community of supporters. The kids love the car the many fans love the driver because he can flat wheel a racecar. There is no argument in that. It remains to be seen if 2013 is the year Kyle Busch puts it together and wins the championship so many think he will get one day. As of now, he is the most polarizing figure in NASCAR. The sport needs him not only for his talent but for the emotions he elicits from the racing community. Love or hate, respect or disrespect, the enigma that is Kyle Busch is one of the best aspects of today's NASCAR world.



Where Have All the Rookies Gone?

By JR Lebert aka jrlebert

One-fourth of the way through the season, and fans and collectors alike are wondering the same thing; who are this year's impact rookies, and when will they make a scene?



Needless to say, NFL fans and collectors were spoiled beyond their wildest dreams last season. As far as rookies go, the 2012 class may go down as one of the greatest classes of all time.

We know all of the big names, and probably spent big money on their cards! Andrew Luck turned the Colts into a contender. Robert Griffin III reignited a Redskins fan base. Russell Wilson turned the Pacific Northwest upside down. Even Ryan Tannehill had Dolphins fans excited for a signal caller again. And those were just the quarterbacks!

Alfred Morris went from 6th round unknown to a true NFL star almost overnight. Doug Martin turned heads in Tampa. Trent Richardson carried the load for Cleveland. All three backs accounted for double digit scores.

Though no receiver broke the 1,000 yard mark, plenty of solid pass catchers found their way onto rosters. Justin Blackmon, Kendall Wright, Josh Gordon, and T.Y. Hilton all became top level threats for their respective teams, and accounted for at least 50 catches each. Michael Floyd, Alshon Jeffery, Stephen Hill, and Reuben Randle played decent roles on playoff caliber teams. Dwayne Allen and Coby Fleener established themselves as up and coming thigh ends, helping to lay the foundation in Indy.

On the defensive side of the ball, Luke Kuechly moved into the NFL's elite at LB, and seems set to anchor the Carolina defense for the next decade. Bruce Irvin and Chandler Jones became solid edge rushers, and Fletcher Cox took his place among the most talented DT's in the league. Casey Hayward and Janoris Jenkins surprised many with their ability to cover.

Heck, even kickers Greg Zuerlein, Justin Tucker, and Blair Walsh made major impacts between the uprights.

All in all, the impact made by the 2012 rookie class was felt from the start. Product flew off the shelves in anticipation of their performance, and they didn't disappoint. Which begs the question... What's going on in 2013?

While analysts certainly didn't forecast major impact by the 2013 class, the relative failure through the first 4 weeks of the season has to be somewhat of a surprise.

Geno Smith tried to lose the starting job all preseason, and only an injury to Mark Sanchez, the result of a horrible coaching decision by Rex Ryan, assured him the job. While he hasn't been completely terrible, maintaining his 2 to 1





INT to TD ratio could lead to Matt Simms seeing the field. With games at Atlanta, Cincinnati and Baltimore on the horizon, improvement must come quickly. E.J. Manuel has certainly been solid thus far in Buffalo, but was already out dueled by Smith in Week 3. He'll get a rematch in Week 11, and will also face both Tom Brady and Drew Brees on the road this year. Stronger tests are sure to come. Mike Glennon didn't seem to be the answer in his first start in Week 4. As runners go, just one back has cracked the 100 yard mark in a game thus far, GB's Johnathan Franklin. He failed to register a single carry before his breakout game Week 3, and then injured himself. No other back has even cracked the 70 yard mark. Montee Ball is stuck in a rotation in Denver, and his continued fumbling has left the NCAA's all-time TD leader in the doghouse. Le'Veon Bell is finally healthy in Pittsburgh, but the offense may never have been worse. Perhaps his 2 TD debut will breathe some life into the Steel City. Giovani Bernard may be the answer in Cincinnati someday, but has failed to crack the 50 yard or 10 carry barriers so far. He does have three total TDs to date. Any breakout stars from the 2013 class may come from the WR position. Kenbrell Thompkins' Week 4 effort, a 6-127-1 line, proves that his communication issues with Tom Brady may be a thing of the past. DeAndre Hopkins may prove to be the perfect yin to Andre Johnson's yang in Houston. Also registering a 100 yard day, Hopkins looks to be in line to reap the rewards of Johnson's double teams. Robert Woods has developed a decent rapport with fellow rookie Manuel in Buffalo. Marlon Brown's 3 TDs have been a bit of a surprise in Baltimore, and Tavon Austin has been exactly what St. Louis has a whole has become, a major disappointment. Cordarrelle Patterson has been relegated to special teams, and doesn't look to be making a mark in Minnesota any time soon. High profile TEs Tyler Eifert and Zach Ertz have been largely ineffective through the quarter pole.

If one defender may become a star from this class, it may be Buffalo's Kiko Alonso. Leading rookies in both combined tackles and interceptions, he may be this year's version of Kuechly. Barkevious Mingo and Ziggy Ansah look to be solid on the outside, and safeties Tyrann Mathieu and Kenny Vaccaro may make an impact in the secondary.

The NFL rookie who may be making the biggest impact this season could be first year head coach Chip Kelly. While his Eagles are just 1-3, they are first in rushing yards and second in total yards on offense. He appears to have the right fit on offense for Vick, McCoy, Jackson and company, and if they can just get a few stops from their defense, may have a chance to win the NFC East.

Either way, it looks to be a bleak year for fans and collectors in 2013 when it comes to the rookie class.





Don Newcombe, Hall of Famer

By JR Lebert aka jrlebert



Major League Baseball will not be mistaken for a progressive, forward thinking organization any time soon. It has been incredibly slow to adopt modern technology, whether for instant replay or calling balls and strikes more accurately. It was slow to adopt the wild card, which has become wildly successful, and slow to changing the designated hitter rule, which needs to be done. It was also extremely late in honoring both Negro Leaguers and players who lost significant time due to service in the military during war time, especially in the case of Buck O'Neil, the Negro Leaguer turned ambassador and historian of the game, who baseball failed to rightly induct in the HOF before his passing in 2006 (or since!).

Well, baseball, consider yourself on notice. There is another injustice worth righting, and it needs to be done sooner rather than later.

Don Newcombe is a Hall of Famer.

Looking back at the career of Don Newcombe, it's pretty astounding that he is not more respected amongst the game's great hurlers. Though his playing career was relatively short, spanning 12 years, but only including 9 full seasons, "Newk" packed as much as he could into that time.

In his first season, 1949, Newcombe took home National League ROY honors, earned with his 17-8 record and a league best five shutouts. He continued his dominance as the new decade began, racking up 19 wins in

1950, and 20 more in 1951, while leading the league in strikeouts. He was named an All-Star in each of his first three seasons.

After the 1951 season, Uncle Sam came calling. Just as Newcombe's career began to take off, it now had to take a back seat to his military obligation. Don lost two prime years, his 26 and 27 year old seasons. As a comparison, Tom Seaver won 41 games over those two years in his career, and the Brooklyn teams Newk would have played on won 96 and 105 games those two years. Who knows how many games Don could have won!

After a partial season in 1954, Newcombe was back on top of the NL again in 1955. Pitching for his only World Series winning club, Don won 20 games yet again, against just 5 defeats, and led the league in winning percentage and K/BB ratio. He was again named an All-Star.

1956 would be Newcombe's best season, and one of the finest seasons by a Brooklyn Dodger. His record would be a sparkling 27-7, with a league best .989 WHIP. His winning percentage would again lead the league. Though not named an All-Star for the first time in any of his full seasons, it was his pitching down the stretch that set him apart. From July 4 through the end of the regular season, Newcombe's record was 18-2, with 11 complete games, and a BAA of .197.



Newcombe's 27 wins were an astounding six more than anyone else in baseball, and seven more than anyone in his league.

For his effort in '56, Newcombe won both the Cy Young Award and Most Valuable Player. In the almost 60 years since, only Justin Verlander has accomplished the same feat while also having won the ROY.

After two down years, he was dealt to Cincinnati, where he experienced a bit of a rebirth in 1959, going 13-8, tying for the team lead in wins, and completing 17 games. By the end of the 1960 season, Newcombe was out of the majors, and his career over.

Newcombe's career numbers don't look nearly as impressive today, after almost 55 years of players and stats accumulating on top of him. Consider this stat: At the time of his retirement in 1960, just 13 players from 1900 on had as many wins (149) and a better winning percentage than Newcombe's (.623). Of those 13 players, 9 are in the HOF, including Lefty Grove, Christy Mathewson, Lefty Gomez, and Dizzy Dean. Newcombe finished with a higher winning percentage than Cy Young, Walter Johnson, Bob Feller, Tom Seaver, Bob Gibson, and Greg Maddux.

Newk was also one of the most feared pitchers once he entered the batter's box. His career average of .271 is higher than HOF teammate Pee Wee Reese and HOFers Mike Schmidt, Willie McCovey, Harmon Killebrew, Johnny Bench, Reggie Jackson, and Gary Carter. Imagine this! In 1955, only Willie Mays had a higher slugging percentage among qualified batters in the NL. He hit as many as 7 HRs and drove in as many as 23 RBIs in a single season, and was often called on to pinch hit. Had the Silver Slugger award existed, he most assuredly would have been a multiple-time winner. If elected, Newcombe's batting average would be the highest of any pitcher enshrined. As a fielder, Newcombe was above average at worst! He led the league in putouts once, and twice led the NL with a perfect 1.000% fielding percentage.

Simply put, Newcombe was the first great Black pitcher in the majors. He hurled at a time when people of color were thought unsuitable to be pitchers, and when racism and bigotry ran rampant. As baseball-reference.com puts it, "One of the most similar players to Newcombe, based on the similarity scores method, is Dizzy Dean. Imagine a player with Dizzy Dean's pitching skills, only with better batting and fielding skills, and then imagine that player dealing with racism while trying to become baseball's first prominent black pitcher. That was Don Newcombe."

Baseball, and history, has looked extremely favorably upon the career of Larry Doby, himself a trailblazer as the first Black player in the AL. It now should turn its eye towards MLB's first superstar Black pitcher, Don Newcombe, who turned 87 this year, before it's too late. Let it not read, "Inducted 201x (posthumously)." Give Don his moment, after military service and racism both cut it short almost 60 years ago. Clear Newk a spot in Cooperstown.





Courtside
By Jay Weger aka Jay520

Box Breaks

A very slow September saw literally 3 breaks. Biggums7 opened a box of 12-13 Absolute to pull a DeAndre Jordan Gold base parallel 5/25, RC autos of Miles Plumlee/349, Reggie Jackson/399 and Andrew Nicholson/349 and a Pau Gasol Iconic gu/auto /25. Qwasian bought 2 boxes of 121-13 Innovation to get a RC jumbo gu of Tristan Thompson, Elton Brand gu, RC autos of Greg Steinsma and Chandler Parsons, Innovative Ink of Nick Young, Fine Print auto of Anfernee Hardaway along with a Dirk Nowitzki View Red insert/25. fballJets got the best hit of the month when he opened 1 box of 12-13 SP Authentic to find a Michael Jordan Home Court Signatures auto!!!

Contests & Winners

October should be a great month to a basketball contest enthusiast. There are several contests to choose from with the start of the NBA season nearly here. The usual season long NBA Top Performers and Guess the Score is returning. With those contests there also will be a NBA Awards contest. New is going to be a Fantasy Basketball league for you fantasy guys out there. Then as November rolls around the 2013 Secret Santa will be open to members who want to show their kindness by getting cards for one another. Please be sure to check out the Box/Case/Pack sales forum for breaks being run by the staff. Right now there are a few going on so get your spots. Then lastly 70sbestcardboard earned 50 CC by correctly guessing the right serial # for the guess the serial # contest. So, Basketball fans out there if you want to try to win some contests you need to get yourself to the basketball forums!!!

Hobby News

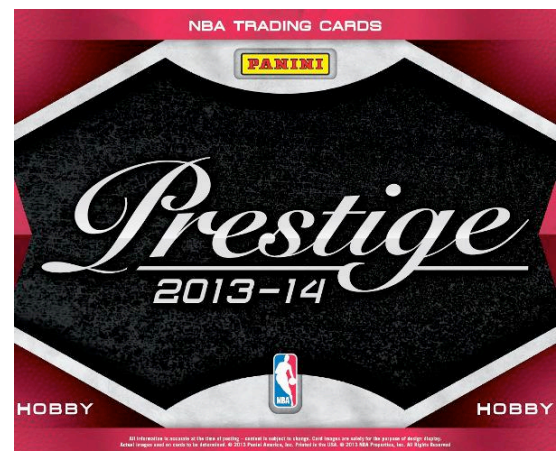
By Taylor Treece aka Lithium

Upcoming Releases:

2012/13 Panini Flawless – Early October, 2013 \$1,250 per box. Each box will contain seven autographs, two jumbo memorabilia cards and a diamond- or emerald-embedded card. No card in the set will be numbered higher than 25 and there will be a maximum of 20 complete base sets available. Diamond-encrusted base cards will be numbered to 20, and will be paralleled by an emerald-embedded version numbered to five and a diamond-embedded 1/1 version.

2012/13 Panini Immaculate-October 30, 2013 Another high-end product from Panini, each box contains 1 pack with 6 cards per pack. This product features 1 autographed rookie patch card numbered to 99 or less per pack, a guaranteed autograph or autographed patch card, 3 other autographed or memorabilia cards, and a base card numbered to 99 or less.

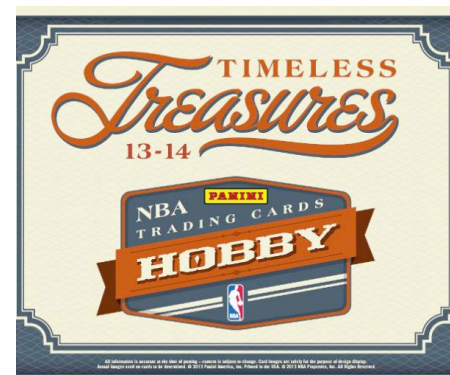
2013/14 Panini Prestige-November 6, 2013 Prestige is back for 2013/14 and loaded with autographs, memorabilia and inserts! Featuring 2 autographs, including the brand-new distinctive ink, 2 memorabilia cards





per box, and with a 200-card base set. Look for hard to find Playmakers inserts, falling 1 per case on average.

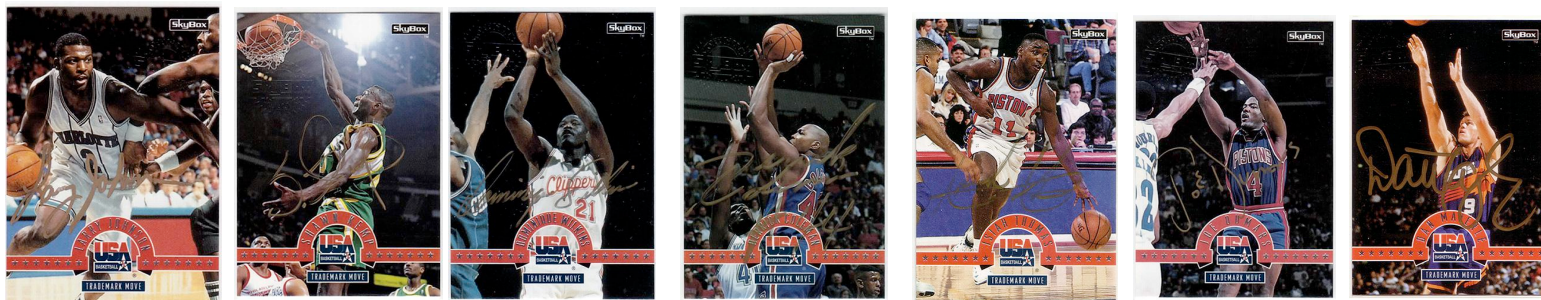
2013/14 Timeless Treasures-December 6, 2013 Every five-card pack of 2013-14 Timeless Treasures Basketball will deliver two autographs, one memorabilia card, one base card and one insert card. Discover the all-new Dual Player Autograph set including Gold and Black versions. All new inserts like Timeless Treasures Trophies and Lottery Winners. Also look for the unique Three-Piece Puzzle chase insert.



Set Completions

Our resident set completion member gatorboymike was at it again. On 9/19/13 he posted that he had finally completed the 1994 Skybox USA Autograph set. The autos were hard to come by from Skybox as they were inserted 1-2 in every case that year and 2 being a retail case exclusive. There are 8 players that signed for the USA set which are Larry Johnson, Shawn Kemp, Dominique Wilkins, Derrick Coleman (NOT listed in Beckett), Isiah Thomas, Joe Dumars, Dan Majerle and Tim Hardaway. While some of the names don't appear to be NBA greats they were stars in the early 90s for sure. So far he is 1 of 3 to have completed this set. So let's congratulate gatorboymike on his achievement!!!

Here are all 7 below to admire.



NBA News

By Dennis Busam aka johnhensonfan

With all the changes in the NBA this off season I will list the projected starting lineups of each team. I will also list a little projection of what to expect with them. The following are my opinions only not facts and should be taken that way.

BOSTON CELTICS

Rajon Rondo, Avery Bradley, Kelly Olynyk, Brandon Bass, Jeff Green

Expect the playoff run to end this year while they rebuild.



BROOKLYN NETS

Deron Williams, Joe Johnson, Paul Pierce, Kevin Garnett, Brook Lopez

This year the Nets are trying to buy a championship before the stars retire.

NEW YORK KNICKS

Raymond Felton, Iman Shumpart, Metta World Peace, Carmelo Anthony, Tyson Chandler

Even with the additions they made look for just the middle of the road.

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS

Michael Carter-Williams, Jason Richardson, Evan Turner, Thaddeus Young, Spencer Hawes

Another rebuilding year.

TORONTO RAPTORS

Kyle Lowry, DeMar DeRozan, Rudy Gay, Terrance Ross, Jonas Valanciunas

Look for them to make the playoffs if they stay healthy.

ATLANTA HAWKS

Jeff Teague, John Jenkins, Kyle Korver, Paul Millsap, Al Horford

Midlevel team this year lucky if they make 8th seed.

CHARLOTTE BOBCATS

Kemba Walker, Gerald Henderson, Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, Cody Zeller, Al Jefferson

Look for more improvement from their 21 win season but not playoff ready.

MIAMI HEAT

Mario Chalmers, Dwayne Wade, LeBron James, Chris Bosh, Shane Battier

If they can keep the distractions of contract year for LeBron, Wade, and Bosh under control look for another championship.

ORLANDO MAGIC

Jameer Nelson, Arron Afflalo, Tobias Harris, Glen Davis, Nik Vucevic





Look for another bad season to continue developing their young players.

WASHINGTON WIZARDS

John Wall, Bradley Beal, Martell Webster, Nene, Emeka Okafor

This could be the season the sneak into the playoffs.

CHICAGO BULLS

Derrick Rose, Jimmy Butler, Luol Deng, Carlos Boozer, Joakim Noah

If Rose is back expect them to challenge the Heat.

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS

Kyrie Irving, Dion Waiters, Earl Clark, Tristian Thompson, Andrew Bynum

Look for them to make the playoffs for first time since LeBron left.

DETROIT PISTONS

Brandon Jennings, Josh Smith, Greg Monroe, Andre Drummond, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope

If they mesh look for a big improvement.

INDIANA PACERS

George Hill, Lance Stephenson, Paul George, David West, Roy Hibbert

This could be the year to beat Miami.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS

John Henson, O.J. Mayo, Brandon Knight, Larry Sanders, Ersan Ilyasova

Another bad season after getting rid of 4 of the top 5 scorers on the team.

DENVER NUGGETS

Ty Lawson, JaVale McGee, Wilson Chandler, Kenneth Faried, Evan Fournier

Look for them to not do as good with a new coach and GM.

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES

Ricky Rubio, Kevin Martin, Corey Brewer, Kevin Love, Nikola Pekovic

If they can play together look for them to be above .500



OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER

Russell Westbrook, Kevin Durant, Kendrick Perkins, Serge Ibaka, Thabo Sefolosha

If Westbrook comes back healthy look for them to challenge the west.

PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS

Damian Lillard, Wesley Matthews, Nicolas Batum, Robin Lopez, LaMarcus Aldridge

Close to a playoff team this year.

UTAH JAZZ

Trey Burke, Alec Burks, Gordon Hayward, Derrick Favors, Enes Kanter

Veteran's gone look for long season developing young talent.

DALLAS MAVERICKS

Dirk Nowitzki, Monta Ellis, Samuel Dalembert, Shawn Marion, Jose Calderon

Will be below .500 as Dirk ages and cant keep up.

HOUSTON ROCKETS

Dwight Howard, Jeremy Lin, James Harden, Chandler Parsons, Omer Asik

Big question is there enough ball for Harden and Howard.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES

Zach Randolph, Mike Conley, Tony Allen, Marc Gasol, Tayshaun Prince

Will challenge for the division.

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS

Anthony Davis, Ryan Anderson, Jrue Holiday, Eric Gordon, Tyreke Evans

Not quite a playoff team yet.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS

Tim Duncan, Tony Parker, Danny Green, Kawhi Leonard, Tiago Splitter

Will this be the year age catches up? Not yet another top 3 team.

GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS

Stephan Curry, Andre Iguodala, Klay Thompson, David Lee, Andrew Bogut



Another step forward will compete for home court.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS

Chris Paul, Blake Griffin, Deandre Jordan, Jared Dudley, J.J. Reddick

With outside shooters and the floor spread look for them to compete for the West crown.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS

Kobe Bryant, Pau Gasol, Steve Nash, Nick Young, Chris Kaman

Age finally catches up and they miss the playoffs.

PHOENIX SUNS

Goran Dragic, Eric Bledsoe, Caron Butler, Markieff Morris, Marcin Gortat

Will compete for worst record.

SACRAMENTO KINGS

Gervais Vasquez, Ben McLenmore, Jason Thompson, Demarcus Cousins, Luc Richard Mbah a Moute

Even with Shaq as part owner, this will be a bad team.





2013-14 Upper Deck Trilogy Mini Box Review

By Roger Barthelemy aka Patriotsguy

Current Online Price - \$217.95 (Full Box, 3 mini boxes) \$79.95 (mini box)

Box Breakdown:

- Three (3) Autographed Rookie Cards
- One (1) Additional Auto (RC or Base Set Parallel)
- One (1) Ice Scripts
- One (1) Signature Pucks Card
- One (1) UD Crystal Plexi-Glass Card
- Two (2) Triple Jersey Cards

3 Mini-Boxes Per Display Box, 3 Packs per Mini-Box, 5 Cards Per Pack

Product Breakdown:

Rookie Cards:

- Rookie Signature Premieres, Level 1 - #d to 699
- Rookie Signature Premieres, Level 2 - #d to 399
- Rookie Signature Premieres, Level 3 - #d to 49
- Rookie Signature Premieres, Triple Signed - #d to 25

Autographed Pucks & More:

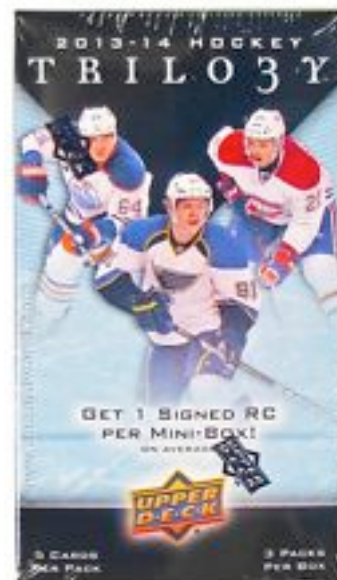
- Signature Pucks - inserted 1:14
- Signature Pucks, Retro Logos - #d to 13
- Signature Pucks, NHL Shield Logo - #d to 3
- Regular Card Autograph parallels - inserted 1:36

Return of the Ice Scripts:

- Ice Scripts - inserted 1:11
- Clear Cut Combos, Tier 1 - inserted 1:183
- Clear Cut Combos, Tier 2 - inserted 1:610
- Clear Cut Combos, Tier 3 - inserted 1:2,286

More Plexi-Glass Cards:

- UD Crystal - Active Stars, Tier 1 - inserted 1:33
- UD Crystal - Active Stars, Tier 2 - inserted 1:90
- UD Crystal - Active Stars, Tier 3 - inserted 1:145
- UD Crystal - Retired Stars, Tier 1 - inserted 1:66
- UD Crystal - Retired Stars, Tier 2 - inserted 1:45
- UD Crystal - Retired Stars, Tier 3 - inserted 1:145
- UD Crystal - Rookies, Tier 1 - #d to 225
- UD Crystal - Rookies, Tier 2 - #d to 125





- UD Crystal - Rookies, Tier 3 - #'d to 75

Triple Jersey Cards:

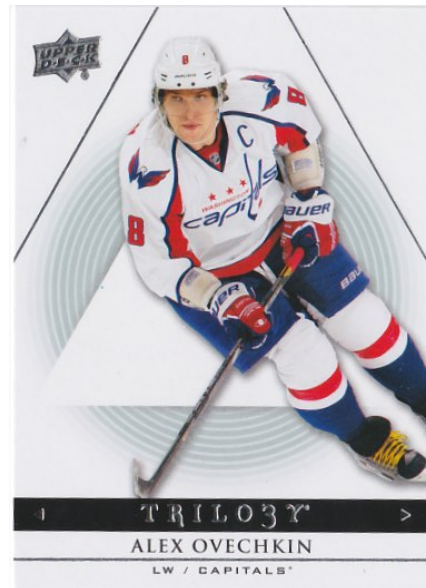
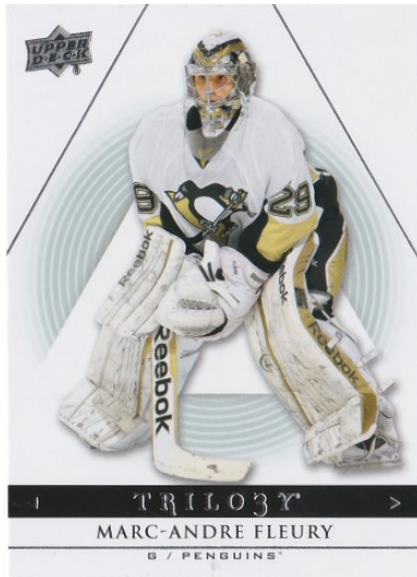
- Three Star Spotlight - Past, Present & Future - inserted 1:9
- Three Star Spotlight - National Trios - inserted 1:9

Regular Cards:

- 100 Regular Cards

What we pulled: [http://youtu.be/37jRcjTGnMU\[/url\]](http://youtu.be/37jRcjTGnMU[/url])

Base:



Nathan Beaulieu autographed rookie 188/699



National Trios triple GU Karlsson Lidstrom Zetterber





Jean Béliveau Signed Puck 7/13

I didn't give the usual rating as it is tough to do so just opening a mini box instead of having the 3 mini boxes normally contained in a regular box.



Pros:

- * On card autos
- * The amount of hits in the box, even in a mini box, keeps you interested.
- * If you're a higher end box breaker, this is a box you'll enjoy.
- * Although we didn't hit a UD Crystal Plexi-Glass Card, I have actually received one and these cards and they look really nice. Reminds me of the acetate type cards but much thicker.

Cons:

- * Base is stale, reminds me of the base from SPA.
- * If you're making a set, you won't want to do it via box breaking

NPN:

Upper Deck

For a free insert card while supplies last go to nnp.upperdeck.com, mail in request will no longer be accepted. Please fill out the required information as directed when you visit the website mentioned.

Once again, thanks to Upper Deck for these packs for review. If you would like to find out more information about UD Trilogy Hockey or any other Upper Deck product please go to www.upperdeck.com





2012-13 Upper Deck SP Authentic Hockey Review By Roger Barthelemy aka Patriotsguy

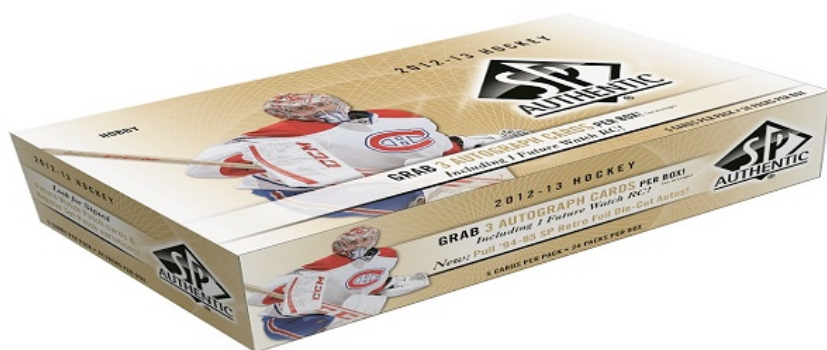
Current Online Price - \$96.95 - \$107.95

Box Breakdown:

- 24 Packs Per Box
- 5 Cards Per Pack

Product Breakdown:

- Autographed Future Watch - #'d to 999
- Sign of the Times
- Sign of the Times Duals - inserted 1:384
- Sign of the Times Trios - #'d to 25
- Sign of the Times Quads - #'d to 10
- Sign of the Times Fives - #'d to 8
- Sign of the Times Sixes - #'d to 7
- Sign of the Times Sevens - #'d to 6
- Sign of the Times Eights - #'d to 5
- SP Chirography - #'d to 35
- All-Time Chirography - #'d to 15
- Premier Chirography -- #'d to 65
- Signature Stoppers - #'d to 25
- Immortal Inks - #'d to 10
- Marks of Distinction - #'d to 25
- Authentic Moments - inserted 1:480
- Authentic Moments multi-players - inserted 1:3,360
- Team Canada Moments - inserted 1:960
- Team Canada Moments multi-players - inserted 1:6,816
- Regular Cards Limited Autos - inserted 1:100
- '94-95 SP Retro Die-Cut Autographs - inserted 1:96



Autographed Patch cards:

- Autographed Future Watch Patch - #'d to 100
- Regular Card Limited Autograph Patch Parallel, Level 1 - #'d to 100
- Regular Card Limited Autograph Patch Parallel, Level 2 - #'d to 25
- Regular Card Limited Autograph Patch Parallel, Level 3 - #'d to 10

(NEW) SPx Bonus Pack!:

- SPx Rookie Auto Jerseys, Tier 1 -- #'d to 275
- SPx Rookie Auto Jerseys, Tier 2 -- #'d to 175
- SPx Rookie Auto Patches, Tiers 1 & 2 -- #'d to 30



- SPx Regular Cards - 2 per pack

Adding SP Retro to the Mix:

- '94-95 SP Retro - inserted 1:4

Upper Deck Series Additions:

- Upper Deck Update - inserted 1:6
- Upper Deck Update Exclusive parallels - #d to 100
- Upper Deck Update Exclusive Spectrum parallels -- #d to 10
- MVP Rookie Update - inserted 1:15

Regular Cards:

- 150 Regular Cards

What we pulled: <http://youtu.be/s1TwPIQFkLI>

SPX Pack:



Base:





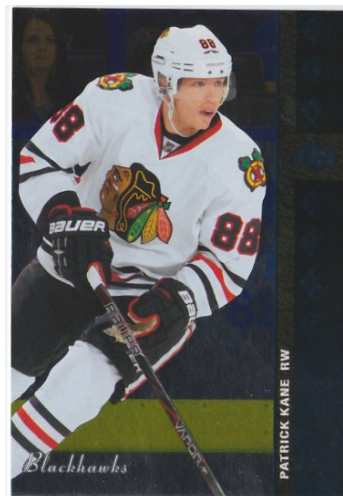
Not pictured:

Team Canada Moments (3) PK Subban, Martin Brodeur, Mario Lemieux

Authentic Moments (5) Mats Sundin, Pavel Bure, Erik Karlsson, Sidney Crosby, Brett Hull

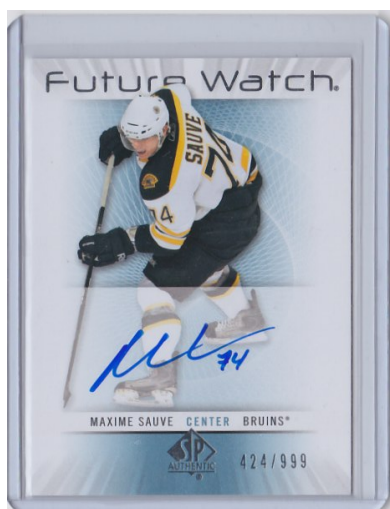
Upper Deck Update (4) Guillaume Latendresse, Jason Spezza, Torrey Mitchell, Jordin Tootoo

MVP Update: & SP Version (6) Jake Allen, Bobby Clarke, Barry Trotter, Anze Kopitar, Wayne Gretzky, Patrick Kane.



Future Watch rookies

Maxime Sauve and Akim Aliu



Premier Chirography and Sign of the Times

Sven Baertschi and Akim Aliu





Base Set Completion: 96/150 **64%**

Design : 3/5

Fun : 4/5

Value : 3/5

Rebuy : 4/5

Overall Box Rating : 14/20 **70%**

Pros:

- * On cards autographs are always a plus.

- * Bonus packs are a nice bonus.

- * The Premiere autos, SP retro, and even the MVP update have a little more zing to them than the the regular base cards and chirography autos.

Cons:

- * Base cards and the Chirography autos look too plain.

- * With only 64% base set completion if you're making the base set from box purchases, you may need 2-3 boxes to complete it.

NPN:

For a free insert card while supplies last go to nnp.upperdeck.com Mail in request will no longer be accepted. Please fill out the required information as directed when you visit the website mentioned.

Once again, thanks to Upper Deck for this boxfor review. If you would like to find out more information about UD SP Authentic or any other upper deck product please got to www.upperdeck.com





SCF Official Review: 2013 Topps Platinum

By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

20 packs per box

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$89.99 - \$109.99

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

AUTOGRAPHED ROOKIE REFRACTOR CARDS - 2 PER BOX!

Variations of the base rookie card design with chrome refractor technology including ON-CARD autographs.

- Black Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 150.
- Blue Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 99.
- Frost Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 50. NEW!
- Purple Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 25.
- Gold Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 15.
- BCA Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 10. NEW!
- Military Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 10. NEW!
- Red Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 5. NEW!
- SuperFractor Parallel: #d 1/1. Hobby Only!
- Printing Plates: #d 1/1. Hobby Only!

DIE-CUT AUTOGRAPH CARDS

BCA & Military Die-Cut Ribbon Autograph Cards:

- Perimeter die-cut ribbon cards, featuring an autograph from a playmaking veteran or rookie. LIMITED

MULTI-AUTOGRAPH ROOKIE REFRACTOR CARDS

Dual Autographed Rookie Cards:

- Dual autograph cards featuring top rookie pairings. Sequentially #d to 25.

Hexagraph Double-Sided Rookie Cards:

- Double-sided cards featuring six autographs of the most collectible rookies. Sequentially #d to 10. Hobby Only!

AUTOGRAPHED REFRACTOR PATCH CARDS - 1 PER BOX!





Autographed Rookie Refractor Patch Cards: Up to 40 top rookie subjects featuring a jumbo patch and an autograph on a chrome refractor card.

- Black Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 125.
- Green Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 99.
- Frost Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 50. NEW!
- Blue Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 25.
- Purple Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 10.
- Gold Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 5.
- SuperFractor Parallel: #'d 1/1. Hobby Only!
- NFL Shield Parallel
- Team Logo Parallel NEW!
- NFL Pigskin Parallel NEW!
- NFL Glove Parallel NEW!

Autographed Veteran Refractor Patch Cards: Up to 15 veterans featuring a patch and an autograph on a numbered chrome refractor card.

- Purple Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 25.
- Frost Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 15. NEW!
- Gold Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 10.
- Red Refractor Parallel: Seq. #'d to 5.
- SuperFractor Parallel: #'d 1/1. Hobby Only!

AUTOGRAPHED REFRACTOR PATCH CARDS

- Dual Autographed Dual Patch Cards: Dual autographs and patches from rookie pairings on chrome refractor technology. Sequentially #'d to 25. Hobby Only!
- Dual Autographed Rookie Refractor Jumbo Patch Book Cards: Dual autographs and large patches from rookie pairings on chrome refractor technology. #'d 1/1. Hobby Only!
- Autographed Refractor Platinum Patch Cards: Featuring autographs and jumbo-sized patches of rookies and veterans on chrome refractor technology. Sequentially #'d to 5. Hobby Only!

RELIC CARDS - CASE HIT!

- Platinum Rookie Patches: Jumbo-sized patch relics on chrome refractor cards. Hobby Only!

INSERT CARDS

- BCA & Military Die-Cut Ribbon Cards NEW!
- Uncut Sheet Redemptions: Redemption cards good for Veteran and Rookie base forms, including X-Fractor, Black Refractor, and Sapphire Parallels! NEW!

BASE CARDS



- Veterans: 100 of the NFL's top veteran stars on rainbow foilboard.
- Rookies: 50 of the NFL's top rookies on Chrome Refractor technology

VETERAN FOILBOARD PARALLEL CARDS

- Sapphire Parallel 1 per Hobby pack

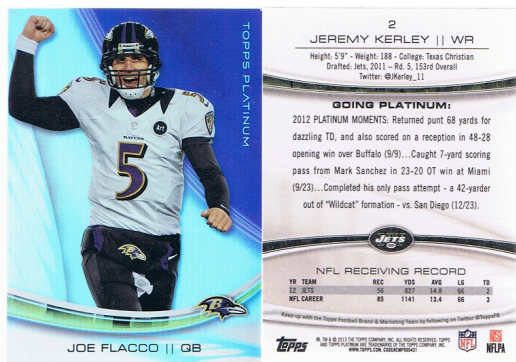
ROOKIE CHROME PARALLEL CARDS

- X-Fractor Parallel: Inserted 1:4.
- Black Refractor Parallel: Inserted 1 per Hobby Box!
- Purple Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 75.
- Gold Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 50.
- Red Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 25.
- BCA Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 10. NEW!
- Military Refractor Parallel: Seq. #d to 10. NEW!
- SuperFractor Parallel: #d 1/1. Hobby Only!
- Printing Plates: #d 1/1. Hobby Only!

What we pulled :

Base: 56/100 (56%)

Sapphire: 19/100 (19%)



There are 150 cards in the Platinum base set. The first 100 is devoted to the veterans. Platinum utilized a rainbow foilboard for the veterans portion. Each one has a Sapphire parallel. The parallels are on a thicker stock and feature a blue track in the background.

Rookies: 12/50 (24%)

Black (1)

X-Fractors (5)

BCA Die Cut (1)



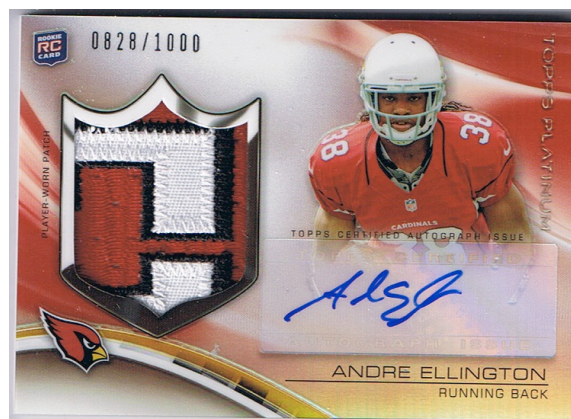


Fifty rookies adorn the base set of Platinum. Instead of the rainbow foilboard, the rookies are featured on a chrome refractor surface. There are eight parallels for each rookie, not including the four printing plates. Each box should contain 1 black and 5 x-fractors on average. Those are unnumbered. The rest are numbered to 75 or less. New to this year's release are the BCA and Military Die Cuts. Also, keep your eyes open for redemption cards towards uncut sheets.

Damontre Moore Rookie Refractor Autograph Redemption (not pictured)

Ray Graham Black Rookie Refractor Autograph (on card) /150

Andre Ellington 3-color Patch/Autograph /1000



Platinum contains two rookie autographs and one patch/auto per box on average. The rookie autographs are on card, which is a huge plus. There are numerous parallel versions as well as the BCA and Military Die Cuts. In addition, there are multi-player options as well. The patch/autographs can be rookies or veterans. Like the last couple of years, the basic rookie version has a high serial number (1000 or higher). However, that doesn't mean there are not a lot of nice patches to be found. Also, many parallels are inserted, which include NFL Shield, Team Logo and Glove versions. The veterans have five parallel options. There are also dual and jumbo patch cards as well.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 5/5

Fun - 4/5

Value - 4/5

Rebuy - 4/5

Overall - 21/25 (84%)



NPN Information

NPN 2013 Topps Platinum Football
PO Box 2008
Duryea, PA 18642

Limit 1 Request Per household

Postmarked By: 12/4/13
Received By: 12/11/13

Canada Skills: $50 + 10 \times 2 - 3 = ?$

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





SCF Official Review: 2013 Topps Heritage Minor League By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

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

24 packs per box

8 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$59.99 - \$79.99

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

AUTOGRAPHED CARDS

Real one autographs

Autographed cards of Minor League Baseball Stars

- Black-Bordered Autographs - Sequentially #d to 35
- Red-Bordered Autographs - Sequentially #d to 10.

NEW!

- Orange-Bordered Autographs - Sequentially #d to 5. NEW!
- Blue-Bordered Autographs - 1 of 1
- Printing Plate Autographs - 1 of 1

Real One Dual Autographs #d to 15.

- Printing Plate Autographs - 1 of 1

RELIC CARDS

Clubhouse Collection Relics

- Black-Bordered Relics - Sequentially #d to 50
- Blue-Bordered Relics - 1 of 1

Minor League Baseball Hat Manufactured Patches

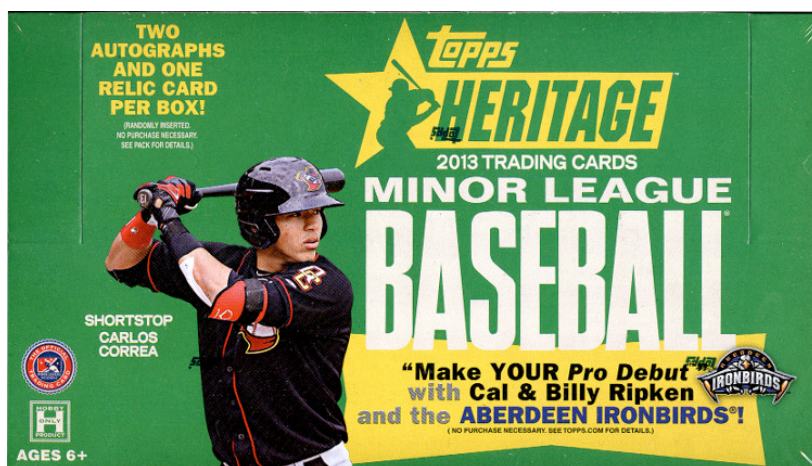
Clubhouse Collection Dual Relics: #d to 25

Clubhouse Collection Patches: #d to 15

Clubhouse Collection Autographed Patches: #d to 10

MAKE YOUR PRO DEBUT

Make your Pro Debut with a Minor League Baseball team and have your own baseball card offered in 2014 Topps Pro Debut Baseball.





The Rundown On



1964 Bazooka

Featuring top Minor League Baseball players in the 1964 Bazooka design.

Road to the Show

Highlights the road that players need to travel to get to the Majors.

MiLB Heritage Uncut sheet redemptions

Featuring the Base Cards from 2013 Topps Heritage Minor League Baseball Edition NEW!

BASE CARDS

BASE Cards (200 Subjects)

Top Minor League Baseball stars are featured in the 1964 Topps Design.

- Short-Printed Base Cards (25 Subjects) - Card Numbers 201-225
- Short-Printed Variations (25 Subjects)

PARALLEL CARDS

- Black-Bordered Parallel (225 Subjects) Sequentially Numbered
- Blue-Bordered Parallel (225 Subjects) - 1 of 1
- Venezuelan Parallel (225 Subjects)
- Printing Plates (250 Subjects) NEW!

What we pulled:

Base - 196/200 (98%)

Dupes - 1

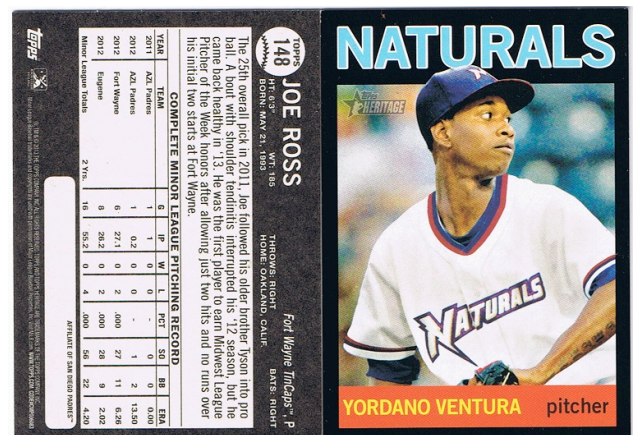
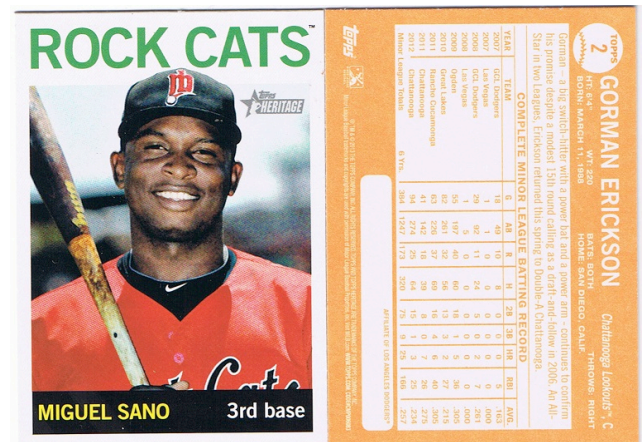
SP - 4/25 (16%)

Variations - 0

Just like the regular version of Heritage, the Minor League edition design is based off of 1964 Topps. There are 225 cards in the base set, with the final 25 being short prints appearing once in every six packs. It is interesting to note that a handful of subjects are featured on teams they are no longer with either due to promotion or demotion. Some of these happened well before the release, so not sure why Topps couldn't update the photos/info.

Topps Venezuelan (1)

Black /96 (3) - Yordano Ventura, Michael Choice, Christian Yelich





Each base card has three parallel versions. Topps Venezuelan is a throwback to the release back in 1964. The front of the card is the same, but the back is a black border instead of orange. These appear once per box. The two numbered parallels are Black (/96) and Blue (/1). On average, these should appear twice in a box, though some can have three or four. Each card also has four printing plate versions.

1964 Bazooka Mini (4)

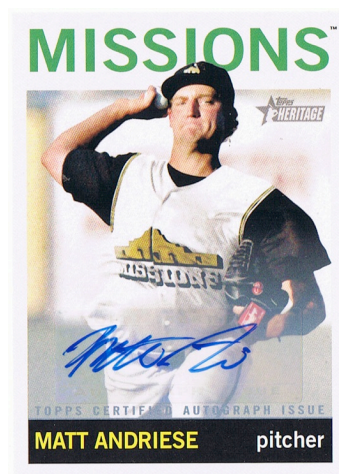
The Road To The Show (6)



There are two inserts set in Heritage. The first is a 25-card set that is a throwback to the 1964 release of Bazooka. This mini card set is a continuation of the mini card craze that Topps seems to think is appealing enough to put in most of their releases this year. To me, the novelty is wearing out. Road To The Show features a handful of players with information on their start from draft pick to their debut. Be on the lookout for redemptions for uncut sheets. Also, randomly appearing in boxes (typically once in every seven boxes) is the Make Your Pro Debut Promo Card. In order to enter the contest, you must have this card. Participants will write a letter to detail what would be their highlight and who they would want to share it with. Top submissions will be listed on Facebook and people will vote for their favorite. The winner will "make their debut" with the Aberdeen Ironbirds next summer and get a meet and greet with Cal Ripken Jr and Billy Ripken.

Clubhouse Collection Bryce Brentz Jersey

Matt Andriese Real One Autograph





Danny Salazar Real One Red Autograph /10

On average, each box will yield 2 autographs and 1 relic. Relics will fall under the Clubhouse Collection umbrella. The basic relics have two parallels, Black /50 and Blue /1. In addition, you could dual relics, hat patches, regular patches or an auto/relic. The autographs are all within the Real One Series. The regular version has four color parallels: Black /35, Red /10, Orange /5 and Blue /1. There are also printing plates for each one. In rare occasions, you will get a dual autograph /15 which has printing plates as well.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4.75/5

Design - 4/5

Fun - 3/5

Value - 4/5

Rebuy - 4/5

Overall - 19.75/25 (79%)

NPN Information

NPN 2013 Topps Heritage Minor League Baseball Edition
PO Box 763
Pittston, PA 18640

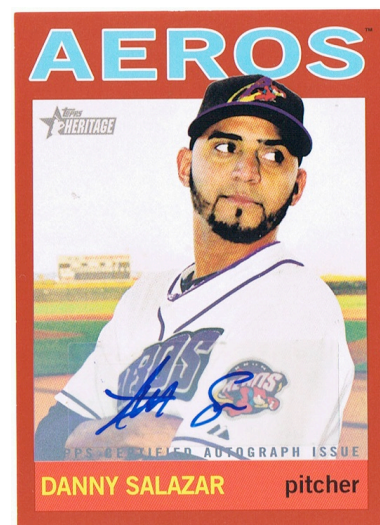
Limit 1 Request Per Household

Postmarked By: 12/11/13

Received By: 12/18/13

Canada Skills: $35 \times 3 + 3 - 5 = ?$

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





SCF Official Review: 2013 Topps Tier One By Tony Joyce aka Enigma

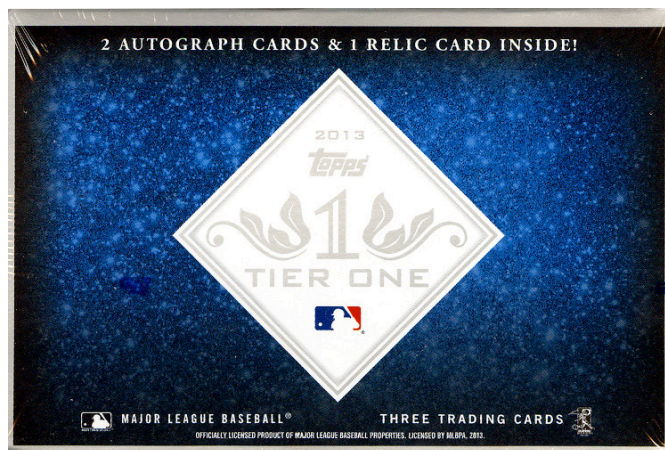
First and foremost, I'd like to thank our sponsors at Topps for providing us with this box.

1 pack per box
3 (or 4) cards per pack
Current Retail Price (online): \$99.99 - \$119.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS:

EVERY PACK GUARANTEES

- 2 Autograph Cards
- *1 On the Rise Autograph And
- *A Tier One Autograph, a Crowd-Pleaser Autograph, a Dual or Triple Autograph, an Autograph Relic, or a Cut Signature
- 1 Relic Card



Every 4th pack includes a bonus Relic Card!
Every 12-count master case guarantees 1 Tier One Autograph Card
Every single- and dual-subject autograph card is signed **DIRECTLY ON-CARD!**

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

AUTOGRAPH CARDS

Tier One Autographs

Over 20 of the best of all time will sign directly on-card. Sequentially numbered to 199 or less. Signed in blue.

On the Rise Autographs

Over 50 young up-and-comers will sign directly on-card. Sequentially numbered no higher than 399. Signed in blue ink.

Crowd-Pleaser Autographs

Over 50 of the most popular players in the game will sign directly on-card. Sequentially numbered no higher than 299. Signed in blue ink.

All subjects featured in THE three SINGLE-PLAYER Autograph sets will receive the following parallels:

- Red Ink Autographs - Sequentially numbered to 25.
- Silver Ink Autographs - Sequentially numbered to 10.
- Gold Ink Autographs - Numbered 1/1.



The Rundown On



Clear Reprint Autographs

25 reprints of classic Topps cards like you've never seen them before - on clear plastic stock! Signed directly on-card and sequentially numbered to 25.

NEW! Clear Reprint Autographs Over-sized Parallel An over-sized version of some of the above cards - bigger, but still clear! Signed directly on-card and sequentially numbered to 10.

Dual Autographs

15 cards featuring classic pairings and on-card autographs of both subjects. Sequentially numbered to 25.

Triple Autographs

5 cards featuring three stars with a common bond. Sequentially numbered to 10.

Cut Signatures

25 cards featuring vintage autographs. Numbered 1/1.

AUTOGRAPHED RELIC CARDS

Autographed Tier One Relics

25 active and retired stars featuring an autograph and a relic. Sequentially numbered to 99.

- Dual Patch Parallel - A parallel with two swatches per card. Sequentially numbered to 25.

- Triple Patch Parallel - A parallel where all three relics are patches. Numbered 1/1.

Autographed Prodigious Patches

25 active and retired superstars with a jumbo patch relic and on-card autograph. Sequentially numbered to 10.

Tier One Autographed Bat Knobs

25 active and retired superstars with the end piece of a bat knob embedded in the card, with an on-card autograph. Numbered 1/1.

Dual Autographed Tier One Relics

Stunning pairings of two active or retired superstars, each with a game-used relic and a sticker autograph. Book card. Numbered to 10.

RELIC CARDS

Tier One Relics

Over 70 active and retired stars. Sequentially numbered to 399.

- Dual Swatch Parallel - A parallel with two swatches per card. Sequentially numbered to 99.

- Triple Swatch Parallel - A parallel with three swatches per card. Sequentially Numbered to 25.

Tier One Legends Relics

15 retired stars. Sequentially numbered to 99.



- Dual Swatch Parallel - A parallel with two swatches per card. Sequentially numbered to 25.
- Triple Swatch Parallel - A parallel with three swatches per card. Sequentially numbered to 5.

Prodigious Patches

25 active and retired superstars with a jumbo patch relic. Sequentially numbered to 10.

Tier One 1/1 Bat Knobs

The smash-hit cards of last year are back. More unique cards featuring a game-used bat knob from superstars both active and retired. Numbered 1/1.

Tier One 1/1 All-Star Relics

Cards highlighting a unique, jumbo patch piece from the 2012 MLB All-Star Game workout jerseys. Numbered 1/1.

What we pulled:

Crowd Pleaser Jim Abbott Autograph /299



On The Rise Scott Diamond Autograph /399



Tier One Relic Yu Darvish Jersey /399



Tier One Relics Jay Bruce Triple Jersey /25





Tier One is a "hit" only product. There are no base cards, though some would argue the On The Rise Autographs could be considered that way since they typically appear once per box. Each pack/box has 3 autographs or relic with every fourth box having an extra auto or relic. No card is numbered higher than 399. Autographs are on-card, which is a refreshing change from the norm. Though be wary of the subject list as many are a head scratcher for this type of release. There are dual and triple autographs within the product as well as the return of the ever-popular Bat Knob cards.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - N/A

Design - 3.5/5

Fun - 5/5

Value - 3.5/5

Rebuy - 4/5

Overall - 16/20 (80%)

NPN Information

NPN 2013 Topps Tier One BB

PO Box 2036

Duryea, PA 18642

Limit 1 Request Per household

Postmarked By: 10/16/13

Received By: 10/23/13

Canada Skills: $8 \times 3 + 1 - 24 = ?$

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





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

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

3 packs per box

5 cards per pack

Current Retail Price (online): \$159.99 - \$199.99

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

- One On-Card Autograph and Two Race-Used Memorabilia Cards In Every Box!
- NEW FOR 2013! One bonus "box topper" pack inserted in every box! One limited edition card per pack—all cards #’d to 20 or 13!



PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Look for the following "box topper" exclusives

- Rookie-of-the-Year Contender cards of Danica Patrick and Ricky Stenhouse, Jr. Race-used cards & insert cards #’d to 20 or 13; autograph cards #’d to 13.
- Showroom plastic insert cards #’d to 20 or 13
- Studio Showcase plastic insert cards #’d to 20 or 13
- Base Card parallels #’d to 20 or 13

AUTOGRAPH GALLERY

On-Card Autograph Cards Include Individually Signed Cards By Top Drivers, Multi-Driver Signed Teammate Autographs, and Autographed Oversized Memorabilia Cards.

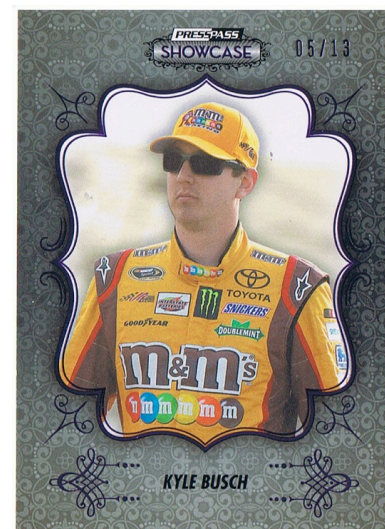
RACE-USED GALLERY

Race-used memorabilia cards feature oversized firesuit, sheet metal, glove or shoe pieces, multi-piece teammate memorabilia, and multi-piece top driver memorabilia.

What we pulled:

Box Topper:

Kyle Busch Purple /13



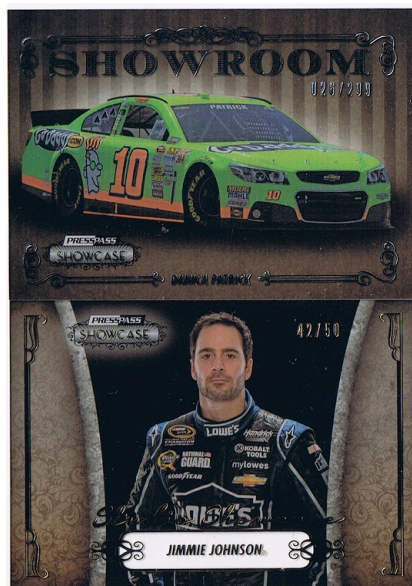


Base /349 (7): Dale Earnhardt Jr, Carl Edwards, Denny Hamlin, Matt Kenseth EE, Mark Martin EE, Marcos Ambrose SS, Hendrick Motorsports CC



With a new design, Showcase is back in a big way. Unlike previous years, the base cards are down in print run from 499 to 349. This means a lot less boxes produced. The subsets are virtually the same with Elite Exhibit and Classic Collections. Subjects are featured on shiny foilboard that looks almost metallic in nature. You will get 2-3 in every pack on average.

Gold /99 (2): Danica Patrick. Jeff Burton EE
Rookie Contenders /299 (1): Danica Patrick
Showroom /299 (1): Danica Patrick
Studio Showcase Gold /50 (1): Jimmie Johnson



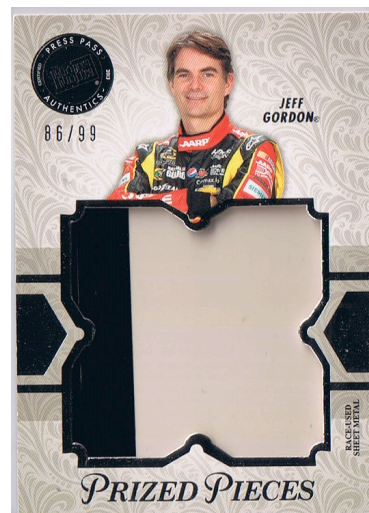
There are various parallel levels for the base cards. Matching the lower numbering for the base, the parallels are more "rare" as well. Inserts are all on acetate cards. Showcase has a focus on Ricky Stenhouse Jr. and Danica Patrick as they are the rookies in Sprint Cup this year, not to mention their off-the-track connection. They are the only two subjects of Rookie Contenders. Showroom shows off the rides of a handful of drivers. Studio Showcase is all about the drivers. Each insert set is numbered to 299 with parallels, much like the base set.



Carl Edwards Prized Pieces Jumbo 1-color Sheet Metal /99



Jeff Gordon Prized Pieces Jumbo 2-color Sheet Metal (Florescent Yellow, not white) /99



Travis Pastrana Elite Exhibit Ink Melting Autograph 1/1 !!!!!!!!!!!



Each pack of Showcase contains either a relic or and autograph. Relics can include pieces of sheet metal, tire, firesuit, shoe or glove. There are also multi-piece and multi-driver versions. Cards will be numbered from 99 to 1. Autographs are on-card, which is typically the case with Press Pass and that is always a great selling point and appreciated among collectors.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Base - 4/5

Design - 5/5

Fun - 5/5

Value - 4/5 (Based on overall production run, not specifically to this box)

Rebuy - 4/5



The Rundown On



Overall - 22/25 (88%)

NPN Information

NPN Press Pass Showcase 2013
9805 Northcross Center Court, Suite H
Huntersville, NC 28078

Limit 1 Request Per Household

Postmarked By: 11/27/13
Received By: 12/4/13

Canada Skills: $50 + (2 \times 4) - 10 = ?$

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

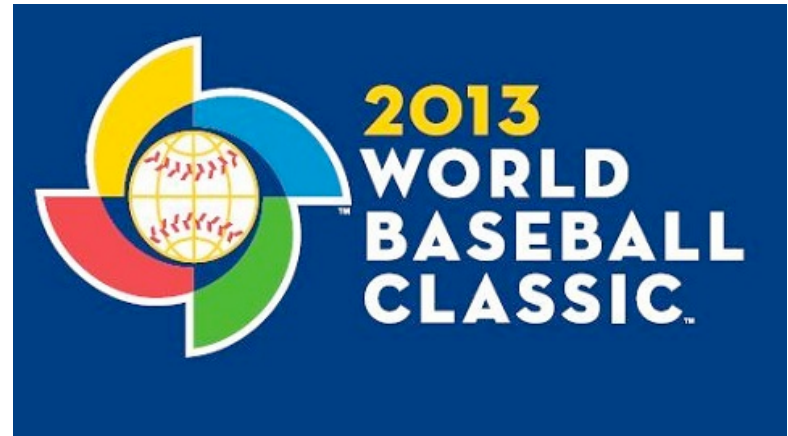




MLB Changes

By Richard Heaton aka Zanderlex

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



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

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

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

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

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

Another way to Improve the MLB would be to add another team to each League. Each league would now have 16 teams, and would be split into four divisions of four teams each. With fewer teams in each division, the competition



would most likely be greater because some divisions may play well and have all four teams within 5-10 games of 1st place.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Anyone Trading a Mickey Mantle RC for... **By James Friedman aka JFried1029**

I need to begin by saying that when I was a kid, my family never had a dog. I suppose this was largely due to my brother's allergies, but I don't think this was necessarily the only reason. I don't think my parents were big into pets.

My first wife was a big dog lover, but she realized that my obsessive-compulsiveness would never allow me to have dogs in the house and be at peace.

When I married my second wife, the kids wanted dogs and we went through four who either died, ran off, or were given back to the person who gave them to us for one reason or another.

When our house was broken into shortly after my father died, my wife decided that because I travel for work she wanted to have a dog in the house for protection. She went to the pet store looking for one type or another of dog and came home with a Shih-Tzu puppy my daughter named Peaches.

While the dog was really my wife's dog, somehow he became attached to me. He shared my pillow and always barked at me when he needed to go out. Over the years he seemed to gravitate to me.

Once I found he was born the day my father died, I became convinced the dog was actually my father reincarnated. Peaches shares my father's personality (stubborn and impatient to the maximum) and even physical features (he has an under-bite).

At times, Peaches can be annoying and I have threatened him that I was going to trade him for a turtle or even a possum, as they are much less effort.

Which leads me to how all of this relates to our hobby. One day the thought occurred to me: instead of trading Peaches for another animal, how great would it be if I could trade him for a 1951 Bowman Mickey Mantle PSA 10? I know at least one exists.

A Mantle rookie in Gem Mint condition is beyond the realm of collecting reality for most of us. But what a thought! Then as with all potential trades, I started to think about the pros and cons of both sides of this deal.

Economically, the trade is not close. The last I saw; a graded gem mint Mantle rookie card goes for \$100,000 or more. I'm not sure what pure-bred Shih-Tzus go for on the market these days (does Beckett have a price guide for dogs?), but I doubt a spoiled seven year old would be worth more than a few hundred dollars maximum.

But we also have to look beyond pure economics.

I pride myself on being an honest trader, so I do have to disclose some condition issues: while Peaches has not been bleached or trimmed, like many vintage cards have been, he would probably benefit from either or both.

He is definitely not in Mint condition; in fact he is dog-eared (sorry). I don't know if his corners are sharp, but his teeth are, if that counts for something.

One the one hand, a Mantle rookie card will never jump on me to share my food or wake me up at six in the morning. The Mantle card will never fight with the other dogs in the house. Most certainly the Mantle card will never pee on the floor. A Mantle card will never cost me money for tags or veterinarian visits.



On the other hand, a Mantle rookie card will not lick me awake in the morning or jump on me excitedly when I return home every weekend from another week on the road. A Mantle rookie card also will not share my love for cookies every night.

The reality is that Peaches has given me more over the last seven plus years than I have given to him (and that's saying something!). He has helped me with my obsessive-compulsive behavior in ways I could never have thought imaginable. And I love him.

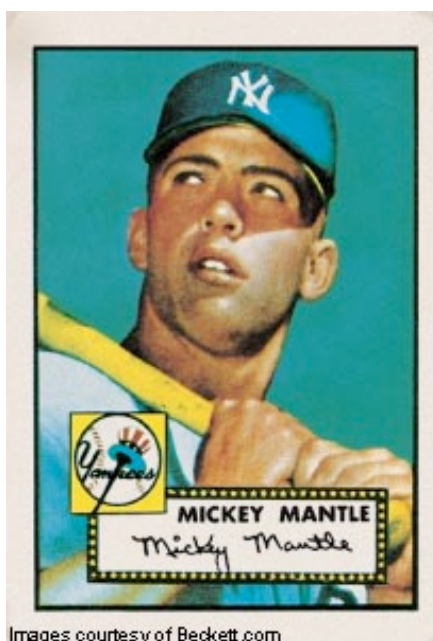
I don't expect to ever have to wonder how I would deal with the opportunity to make this trade because I obviously would never expect in my lifetime for someone to propose this offer to me.

After careful analysis I have decided the following:

- If the Mantle rookie card was graded a six or lower I am 100% sure would not make the trade.
- If the Mantle Rookie card was graded a seven, I would consider trading my son's American Bulldog Nina for it (she's another story).
- If the card was graded an eight, I would probably ask for something else to be thrown in, like a Mays rookie card, to sweeten the deal.
- If the Mantle card was graded a nine, I might be convinced to make the trade, but it would have to be a high-end nine

And if the card was graded a ten? While I consider this to be an event that is completely beyond all plausibility, one thing is for sure:

Peaches should be thankful that he will never get to find out for sure just what I would do.



Images courtesy of Beckett.com

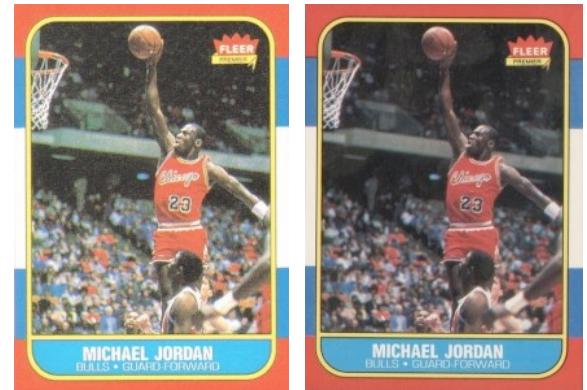


Beware of the New Type of Printing

By Guy Mitchell aka sweetg1

The technology continues to improve. We went from rotary dial phones to push button phones. From there, the technology went to cell phones to where the smart phone is today. Technology is great, right? It's what pays the bills in my household, as I work for a technology company in innovation. For the card hobby, we've seen the technology, as the industry went from the old, thin cardboard stock in the 40s and 50s to Upper Deck changing the game in 1989. From there, the industry went to the ultra-super-glossy refractoid cards (although it's been documented that I'm not necessarily a fan of these cards, I do appreciate that it can be done). The changes to the industry made opening a pack of cards seem like Charlie finding the golden ticket in Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.

It's been well documented that there are a lot of scam artists in the collectibles industry. The FBI was called when fake autographs appeared on the market. Did Ty Cobb really sign 100 Bill White baseballs? I think not. It hit the card industry too, as many counterfeit cards appeared in the market. You remember all of the counterfeit Michael Jordan and Wayne Gretzky rookie cards? It took the fun out of genuinely finding one of these gems, and it burned a lot of people, costing them lots of money. What made the counterfeits "easy" to spot was a few facts: 1) the picture quality was fuzzy or otherwise poor and 2) the card stock was different enough to the veteran that it felt different in their hands. However, to the novice collector, it was hard to tell and lots of innocent people were fooled. Given that the newer cards were drawing in lots of new collectors, the counterfeits came in droves to newer cards, as collectors didn't have to pay much for a newer pack, hoping to strike gold. Not as many counterfeits were seen on older cards.



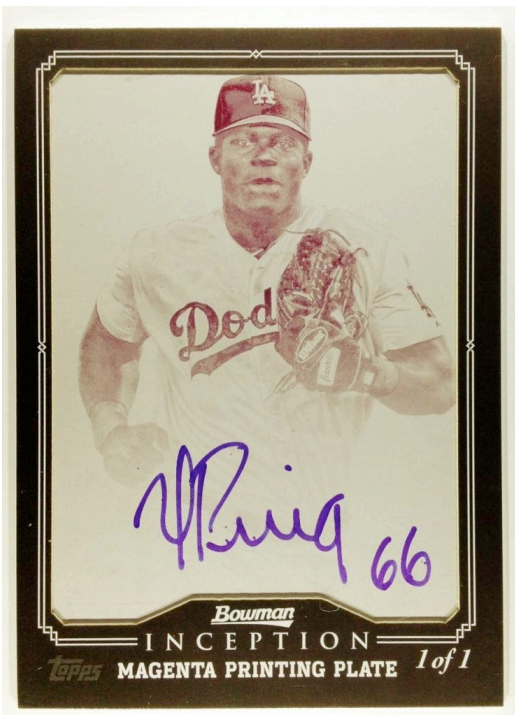
Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to the world of 3D printing. For those not familiar with 3D printing, it is a way to print items in three dimensional space. For instance, a wrench, as shown in this youtube video could be recreated by using 3D printing:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ-aWFYT_SU\[/URL\]](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQ-aWFYT_SU[/URL])

It has caused some controversy because the concept of printing a weapon became real.

So what does this mean to the collectibles hobby? The picture quality and color could no longer become an issue for counterfeiting a Ken Griffey Jr. rookie card. Can you imagine capturing the color (as well as properly capturing the coloring of the borders) of a Mickey Mantle rookie? What about some of the newer cards? Your game used card or worse yet, your 1/1 printing plate of Yasiel Puig that is on eBay for a price of \$2,500 or best offer? How easy would it be to create this with 3D print technology and sell it? And what about statues, like the Hartland Statues that sell for a pretty penny? Is the game changing?

Obviously, there are copyright laws that prevent people from doing such despicable deeds. However, it would seem that most criminals who prey on people (especially young collectors) with this kind of money don't have morals or don't care who they hurt. They're not concerned about copyright laws. They care about printing up a bunch of these types of items



and selling them cheap! Or, they will trade you their newly printed 1/1 printing plate for your real Jordan RC, where they can now trade or sell the Jordan RC. That's how these people operate.

The point of this article isn't to cause unnecessary fear in the collecting hobby, but to make people aware that bad things sometimes come with the good of the new technology. Obviously, we have to be sure of what we're purchasing. We have to continue to buy from reputable dealers and know exactly what we're purchasing. We must ask questions. However, I ask this: How will reputable dealers always know the difference between a real and a 3D print? 3D printing can be a game changer in places like eBay, where people can find items for 10% cost and places like SCF where people make hundreds of trades each day.

I'm curious about your thoughts on this. Is this as a genuine concern?

Let's keep trading fun. Happy Collecting Everyone!





Student Athletes **By Richard Heaton aka zanderlex**

Currently, there is a huge debate on whether or not Student Athletes should be paid for participating in N.C.A.A. sporting events. There are some who believe that an athletic scholarship is all that a student needs while there are others who say that an athletic scholarship is nothing compared to how much money the N.C.A.A. pulls in each year per student.

During the final few days of September 2013, EA Sports and another sports licensing company settled with Student Athletes, which leaves the N.C.A.A. defending itself on its own. Because of this, drastic changes will begin all over colleges across America if the N.C.A.A. either loses the lawsuit or settles.

It hasn't happened yet, though there is a simple way on how colleges could pay their athletes. Let's pick a football conference with eight teams and have that conference pick a maximum amount that the schools would pay each player.

Let's say that this maximum amount is five thousand dollars, each school would give the conference five thousand dollars per student and the conference would hold that money until the end of the season. At the end of the season, the money will be distributed to the players based on what place their schools have finished in.

The school that finishes in first place will get the maximum amount, which means that each athlete will receive the full five thousand dollars. The team that finishes in second place will distribute ninety percent of the amount to its players. Therefore each athlete of the second place team will receive a total of forty five hundred dollars.

The amount will decrease by ten percent per place all the way down to the team that finishes in eighth place. Each of their athletes will receive thirty percent of the maximum amount, or fifteen hundred dollars.

Each team puts in five thousand dollars per player, so what happens to the extra money that each of the bottom teams puts in? Each team will receive the extra money back, however they may have restrictions. This means that the last place team will get thirty five hundred dollars back per player.

Every now and then we have a good player who plays for a bad team, so how do we compensate for a player who played for the eighth place team, received fifteen hundred dollars, and led the conference in a certain stat? The answer is quite simple and is the basis of those restrictions mentioned earlier.

If a player leads the conference in a major stat but plays for a team that finishes in the bottom half of the conference, that player will be required to be given a percentage of the refund that their school received.

The eighth place school receives a thirty five hundred dollar refund per player, and there is a five hundred dollar decrease per place. This means that the fifth place team, the first of the bottom half will receive a refund of two thousand dollars.

Therefore, a conference leader could be paid a one thousand dollar bonus for being on the eighth place team with a two hundred dollars decrease per place which means a leader on the fifth place team will receive a two hundred dollar bonus. It would also be possible for second place stat finishers to get a reward at a fifty percent rate which means five



hundred dollars for playing on the eighth place team and one hundred dollars for playing on the fifth place team, and maybe even a twenty five percent rate for third place finishers.

There has also been a lot of talk that if athletes of big sports such as football and basketball were paid, then athletes of all other sports would have to be paid as well, no matter how small the sport.

This can also be fixed with the conference setting a maximum reward for each sport. With this, any given school in a certain conference could have a maximum amount of five thousand dollars for football and basketball, maybe two thousand dollars for baseball and soccer, and maybe even five hundred dollars for sports as small as Swimming and Volleyball.

Who knows, maybe a format like this would help the athletes, Colleges, and N.C.A.A.



Come On You Gunners!

By Anthony Christiana

“And it’s Arsenal, Arsenal FC! We’re by far the greatest team the world has ever seen.” This is one of many famous chants that I have sung over the years from my living room. Following a European soccer team living in the United States is not an easy thing. We all know about the exposure of soccer here in the states. The popularity has grown in the past years but it is nowhere near the leagues played in the rest of the world. Don’t even get me started about the skills that the players have compared to Americans. Look at David Beckham or Thierry Henry, they are coming here in their late thirties and outplaying and outclassing the players in their twenties that are in the prime of their career. I myself got the opportunity to play with a youth star from FC Barcelona back in high school and he outplayed our entire state championship team. Soccer in Europe is a league of its own and it has been a lifelong dream of mine to travel to London and instead of chanting at a TV, I can support my team with thousands of others.



The biggest struggle with being an Arsenal fan in the United States, is of course, the price. The fans that live in London just have to go to the game, simple. Oh how I wish it were that easy for me. I am currently planning my first trip to London at the end of December through the beginning of January and I am watching the dollar signs flash through my head as I add up all my expenses. First off, who is going to go to London for one day, watch a game and fly home? I am spending almost a grand on my round trip flight, I am going to make the best of my trip. I will be leaving from JFK airport the night of the 28th of December and returning January 4th at night, so I will have a whole week to enjoy myself. While in London, I will have to worry about food, transportation, hotel expenses and any souvenirs. Sights to see in London range from the tower bridge to Big Ben, not to mention that is all before I even buy the ticket to the game. So one fans one hundred fifty dollar ticket turns into a two thousand dollar trip for another.

Then there are the tickets. Oh how I wish it was an easier process. In England, it is illegal to sell tickets through a 3rd party company. The only place you can buy them is directly through the box office of the team, and the headache doesn’t end there. Arsenal are one of the most popular teams in England and getting the tickets is not easy, so it should be no surprise that there is a money scheme that the team is going to exploit to bring in more revenue. The first tickets that go on sale, which is two months before the game, go to season ticket holders and silver club members. In order to get a silver club membership, you must be a red member for at least two years. Red members get to buy their tickets one month before game day and it costs \$50 per year to be a red member. I am currently a red member for Arsenal so getting tickets will be a bit easier, plus the game I plan on attending is against a low key team. All I know is I have to be up at 5 am on December 1st on my computer ready to snatch a ticket. I was told that red members are guaranteed 3,500 seats plus what isn’t scooped up by silver members, so I should be fine! As a diehard Arsenal fan I am willing to pay whatever price they throw at me. Plus, I can get midfield field level seats for \$150 dollars. Try getting any tickets to a New England Patriots game for that price!

The fan base for Arsenal is iconic. It isn't as many as Barcelona or Real Madrid or Manchester United, but it's not about the amount of fans, it's about the passion and support given. Every single match that I watch, players are always playing to their fullest. After the game is over a lot of the players sign for fans at no cost stay at the stadium thanking them for their constant support, and so much more. I believe European soccer isn't just a sport, it is a community. We love our teams and our teams love the fans.

Being an Arsenal fan in the United States the one major thing I could see being improved it the accommodates the team could offer for its international fans. It is hard to get tickets to these games in the first place and we still have to worry about when to go and where we are going to stay while we are there. Arsenal currently does not have it, but other teams such as Chelsea and Manchester United are partnered with a company called James Cook, where you pay for your plane tickets, transportation, hotels and match day rickets all through that company and gets you discounted rates and guaranteed seats at the stadium. Every match so many tickets are pre-allocated to James Cook, so the company only puts out as many packages out as has available. More teams I could see benefiting from this service greatly.

I have been following Arsenal since 1999. I grew up in a family from Italy and England. My British side were all Manchester United fans and my Italian side were all AC Milan fans and I was always pressured to pick a side. One day I was watching a Manchester United game with my uncle, Arsenal versus Manchester United. The was the day one of the most iconic Arsenal goals were scored. Thierry Henry flicked the ball up spun around and volleyed it into the back of the net from twenty yards out. Intentional or not it is one of the most famous Arsenal goals of all time. From that day forward I was a proud Gunner and never looked back. I cannot wait until I get the chance to see them play in January. To me, they are indeed by far the greatest team the world has ever seen.

