

# An elusive search for Pokemon yellow has frantic mom banking on Santa

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**S**old out. Two words parents don't want to hear 24 shopping days before Christmas.

Two words that turn consumers into a frenzied, panicked, elbowing mob.

Two words that had me phoning, cajoling, even begging clerks for a spot on a waiting list.

I heard those words over and over and over Tuesday morning as I desperately tried to buy the hottest game of the year — Nintendo's Pokemon yellow version for Game Boy — Pikachu edition — for my eight-year-old son, Kody.

You see, for a Pokemon fan, the yellow version is a must-have in a growing collection that also includes Pokemon characters (151 in all), Pokemon cards, Pokemon video games and the afternoon Pokemon cartoon, which, incidentally, can't be missed.

Those treasured little pocket monsters from Japan are causing me great stress.

The yellow game is special because, unlike the red and blue versions, it features Pikachu, who follows Ash (the player) throughout the game, helping him capture all the other characters. Pikachu even surfs the waves in one scene to catch up to Ash and appears by herself in others. Ultra cool.

My confidence in purchasing the \$50 game was dashed early in my search, however, after just one phone call.

"Forget about it. You're not going to find one anywhere," said Sarah Roberts, electronics department clerk at Toys R Us in Newmarket.

Not an encouraging statement when you're looking for the one toy that is certain to light up your child's eyes Christmas morning.

Pokemon yellow version is definitely the game of the year and proof is in the sales. Nintendo of Canada Ltd., based in Vancouver, has already sold more than a million copies and the release of *Pokemon: The First Movie*, didn't hurt.

Many retailers are blaming an inability to keep up with consumer demand on the company.

"Nintendo does this every year. They hype up a game and they decide what game will be the hottest," said Ian Haxton of Gamers World in Newmarket.

Haxton said he gets between six and 10 calls a day from people wanting the version and he hopes to get a shipment next week. He already has them sold, based on a list of about

50 people just waiting for his call. I told him to add my name. Markville Shopping Centres' CompuCentre, sold its last Pokemon yellow version two weeks ago, has a waiting list of 43 people and receives 30 calls a day from consumers hoping to find someone, somewhere with a full stockroom.

CompuCentre sales representative Senthil Balendran said his head office has some in stock, but each of the stores is waiting for its share of the hot commodity.

"It's not impossible to get (a yellow version game) before Christmas, but it will be difficult — maybe a 30-per-cent chance," he said.

Balendran said Nintendo simply underestimated the explosive popularity of the game.

"It's just that the demand is higher than the supply. Factories are making them, but quantities are low," he said.

Electronics Boutique salesperson Marcus Passafiume in Newmarket summed up the whole Pokemon situation in two sentences.

"It's a headache. It's my nightmare."

Join the club.

Sears Canada catalogue shopping turned out to be a bust, as well. One employee told me she can't even put my name on a waiting list because they currently have more than 800 Pokemon yellow versions on back order.

And Wal-Mart stores across York Region are sold out, without much hope of getting new supplies in before Dec. 24 at midnight.

I guess Kody and I will just have to count on Santa.

He'll pull through. He always does.



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Marcus Passafiume, manager of the Electronic Boutique in Newmarket's Upper Canada Mall, wishes he had more copies of the super-hot Pokemon yellow version to sell. These are just the promotional materials the company sends to outlets.

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