



A dealer shows off some of his wares during a weekly sports card show at the Thornhill Community Centre.
STAFF PHOTO/ROGER VARLEY

CARD SHARKS

Sports card dealers barely noticed NHL lockout as collectors kept on pursuing favourites

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

Although the National Hockey League lockout hurt many businesses, the sports card industry hardly noticed.

Business fell off slightly between August and the end of September because of a lack of new NHL product, but sales are rebounding, said Igor Grinch of Grinch Sports Cards on Centre Street in Thornhill.

Cards were produced last year of NHL prospects, such as Sydney Crosby, showing them in their junior uniforms, said Terry Radchenko of 1 Step Ahead Sales in Brampton. There was a lot of demand for them, he said.

"That also has generated a lot

'A player who scores a lot, his price goes up, or players people love, like Tie Domi.'

Terry Radchenko
1 Step Ahead Sales

of interest in (Crosby's) first NHL card," Mr. Radchenko added, noting Mr. Crosby's prospect card would be a "keeper", but it wouldn't be classified as a rookie card, which will be more valuable.

The two men are among a handful of dealers showing their wares every Tuesday evening at the Thornhill Community Centre at Bayview Avenue and John Street. Between 40 and 50 people show up most nights, Mr. Rad-

chenko said.

While many fans said they were turned off by the lockout, it appears hockey card collectors aren't among them.

This year's NHL cards will include two year's worth of NHL draftees, which will also heighten the interest of collectors, Mr. Radchenko said.

Mr. Grinch said he has many customers who come in and spend \$200 a month on NHL cards.

He put them into four categories: those who collect only certain players, those who collect certain teams, those who want to buy sets and ones only interested in rookie cards.

But they range in age from seven to their mid-80s, from blue-collar workers to lawyers, he said.

'As a dealer, it's hard to get attached to cards or you'll want to keep them all.'

Igor Grinch
Grinch Sports Cards

He began as a collector before becoming a dealer about three years ago.

"As a dealer, it's hard to get attached to cards or you'll want to keep them all," he said.

Many people collect the cards because they relate to the players, Mr. Radchenko said.

"They see players as someone they respect or who reminds them of their youth," he said.

That's why Bobby Orr, Gordie

Howe, Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux cards are still in demand.

"Bobby Orr cards, I can't keep them in," Mr. Grinch said.

Mr. Radchenko agreed, noting, "Bobby Orr is the number one choice, especially among those who saw him play," he said.

And that's why, just as in the stock market, demand and supply determine the value of cards, Mr. Radchenko said.

"A player who scores a lot, his price goes up, or players people love, like Tie Domi."

He noted the value of goalie Ed Belfour's cards went up after he was traded to Toronto Maple Leafs.

"It's all speculation," he said, but added the value of most cards goes up.

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