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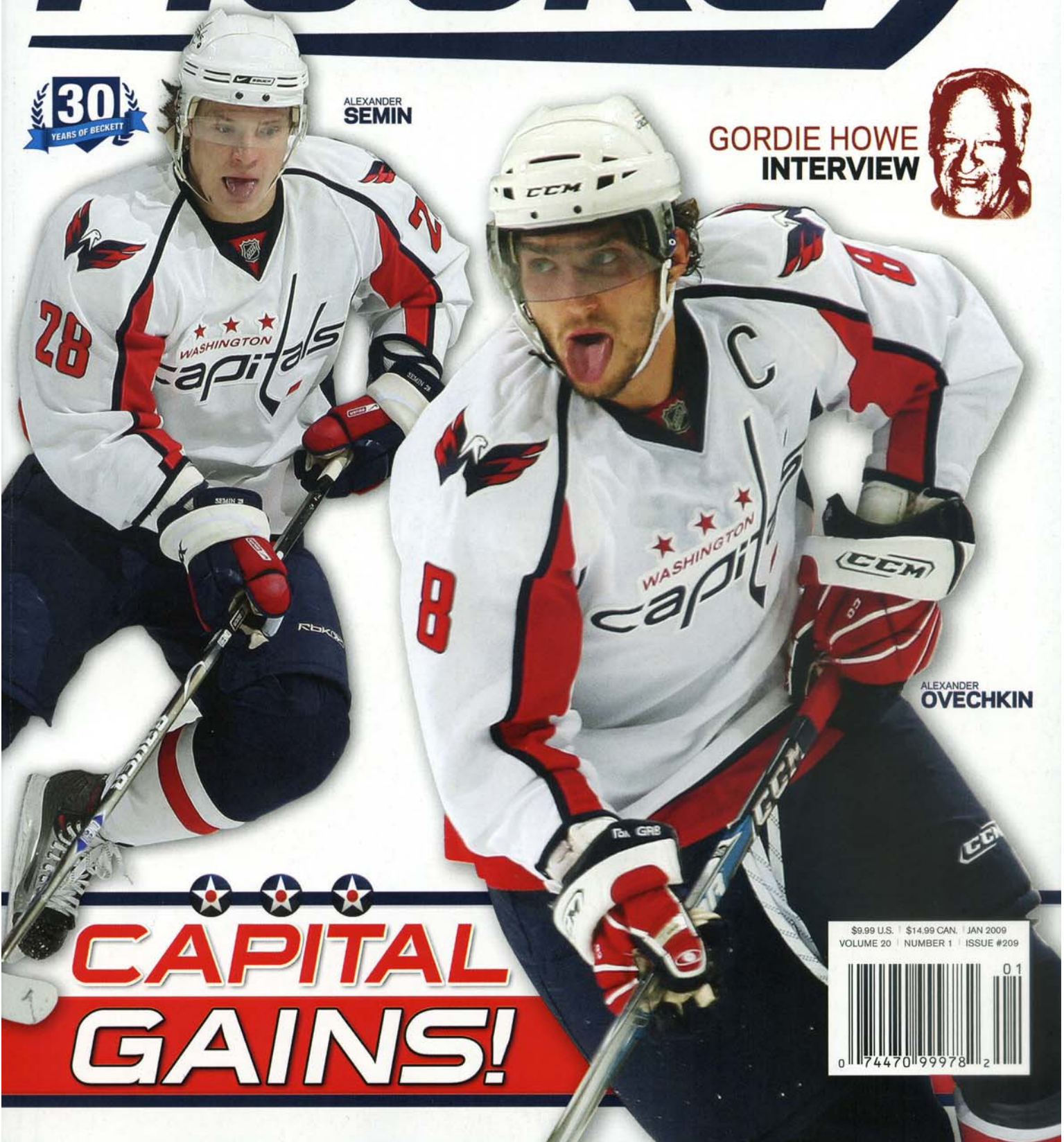


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INTERVIEW



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PRO SET

There is still lots to love about 1990-91 Pro Set

By Sal J. Barry



Stop me if you've heard this joke before...

Q: What do you get when you take a worthless hockey card and divide it by three?

A: Pro Set.

While Pro Set cards may be a dime a dozen – and still, that would be overpaying – its inaugural set, from the 1990-91 season, is one that no hockey card collection should be without.

Despite its sheer overabundance on the secondary market and numerous errors – as well as being the punch line of many card-collecting jokes – Pro Set broke new ground, breathing new life into an industry that had been virtually



HALL OF FAME PLAYER

SEASON (22)	GP	G	A	PTS	PIM
1927-28 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1928-29 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1929-30 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1930-31 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1931-32 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1932-33 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1933-34 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1934-35 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1935-36 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1936-37 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1937-38 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1938-39 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1939-40 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1940-41 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1941-42 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1942-43 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1943-44 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1944-45 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1945-46 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1946-47 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1947-48 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1948-49 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1949-50 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1950-51 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1951-52 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1952-53 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1953-54 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1954-55 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1955-56 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1956-57 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1957-58 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1958-59 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1959-60 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1960-61 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1961-62 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1962-63 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1963-64 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1964-65 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1965-66 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1966-67 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1967-68 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1968-69 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1969-70 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1970-71 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1971-72 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1972-73 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1973-74 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1974-75 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1975-76 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1976-77 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1977-78 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1978-79 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1979-80 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1980-81 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1981-82 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1982-83 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1983-84 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1984-85 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1985-86 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1986-87 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1987-88 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1988-89 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1989-90 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0
1990-91 (Montreal)	17	1	1	2	0

GORDIE HOWE
 First All-Star Team: 12 times
 Second All-Star Team: 8 times
 NHL All-Star Game: 22
 Hart Trophy: 1952, 1953, 1957, 1958, 1960, 1963
 Art Ross Trophy: 1952, 1953, 1954, 1957, 1963
 Lester Patrick Trophy: 1967

Gordie was, over an unprecedented 32-year career, a superbly smooth skater, tremendously strong, aggressive, and determined scorer and team player. He still holds the career record for points in pro hockey. Gordie also holds six All-Star Game records. He became the first playing president of a pro team, the first father to play pro hockey with two of his sons and the first playing grandfather.

680 **PRO SET** **PRO SET**

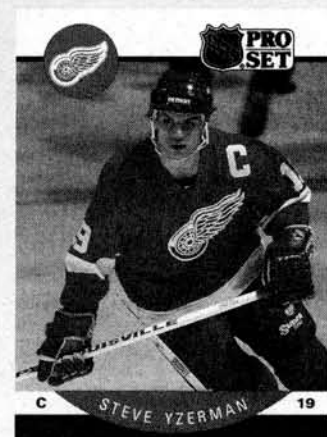
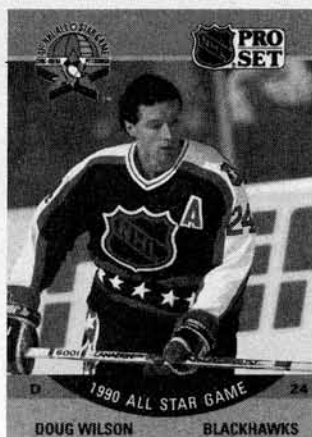
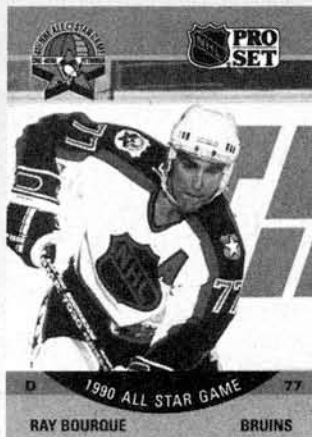
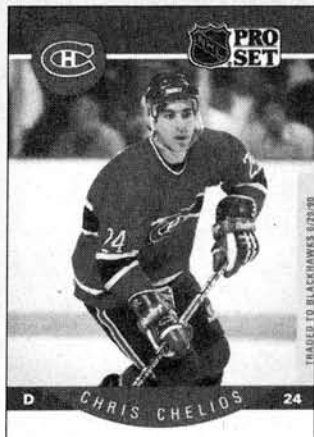
great qualities of many a trading card. Here are several reasons why this landmark set deserves some "hobby love" and merits inclusion in any serious hockey collection.

THE LARGEST SET EVER

controlled by Topps and O-Pee-Chee for the past quarter century.

You're probably wondering why one should dedicate space in their card collection for a set that sells for around five bucks. After all, you won't be able to sell it later on to fund your kid's college tuition. Well, investment potential is overrated, overshadowing other

First of all, the 1990-91 Pro Set hockey set was the largest set of NHL trading cards ever released. Up until 1990, hockey sets were usually around 200 to 300 cards in size, and never topped 396 cards. That all changed in 1990, when Pro Set – along with Upper Deck and Score – took the hockey card market by storm. When Pro Set Series One came out, it was comprised of 405 cards. While the competition would





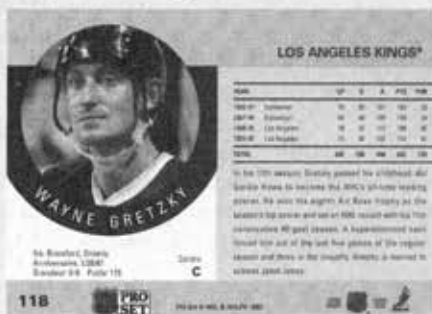
release larger sets once hockey season started, Pro Set would not be outnumbered for long. The release of Pro Set Series Two added an additional 300 cards, for a grand total of 705. In later years, some sets would come close to eclipsing that number, such as the 1991-92 Upper Deck or 2005-06 Parkhurst offerings – each containing 700 cards – but to this day, 1990-91 Pro Set Hockey remains the largest NHL set ever made.

AWESOME DESIGN

Certain hockey card sets stand out as favorites because of their great designs. Who could forget the flag-themed 1963-64 Parkhurst; the bright, bubbly design of 1971-72 Topps; or the two-photo fronts of 1984-85 O-Pee-Chee? It is about time that 1990-91 Pro Set gets its long-overdue recognition as being one of the best designs in hockey card history.

Looking at the front of a player card, you'll notice the colorful top and bottom bands that border the photo, as well as the

lack of vertical borders. By omitting borders on the sides, the photo is given more room, making the design feel more open and subtly emphasizing the constant motion and flow of the game. The top and color bottom borders nicely match those of the given team's uniform – red, white and blue for Montreal, black and gold for Boston, and so forth. This gives each card and overwhelmingly



team-centric design, making that Bruins card actually look like a Bruins card. Breaking up the potential monotony of too many horizontals is a circle with the team logo, as well as a semicircle at the bottom containing the player's name. This technique is further utilized on the back, where a circular portrait shot of the player is used.

SERIES 1 + SERIES 2 = PLAYERS-A-PLENTY

Out of the 705 cards, 532 of them are of players in their team uniforms – an average of 25 players per team – making it the most comprehensive set from 1990-91. Virtually every player to suit up in the prior or current season is represented in this set.

Considering that there were nine less teams back then – 21 instead of 30 – and that most sets these days have around 300 cards, we may never see a set this complete in its selection of players.

Of course, all the big names like Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux and Steve Yzerman are here, as well as a slew of rookies. Superstars like Jaromir Jagr, Sergei

Fedorov, Jeremy Roenick, Curtis Joseph and Mike Modano all have rookie cards in this set – as did less successful rookies; do the names Bruce Shoebottom, Per Djos or Sergei Priakin ring any bells? But many players who were long overdue for a cardboard appearance finally got one, including Gary Galley, Tim Hunter and Rick Zombo, to name a few.

FIVE FACTS ABOUT THE 1990-91 PRO SET HOCKEY SET

- Up until this point, hockey sets did not come out until October or November, after the season was underway. Pro Set was the first to release a set before training camp, with Series One hitting shelves in September 1990. Nowadays, it's common for sets like Victory to appear before the season starts.
- A Stanley Cup Hologram card, hand numbered to 5,000, was randomly inserted into packs of Pro Set Series One, making it the first ever "chase" card to get inserted into packs of hockey cards.

- For some unknown reason, Mike Hough – an average player in his day – appears twice in this set, both cards showing him as a Quebec Nordiques player (cards #247 and 516)
- There are over 100 errors in this set – many of them uncorrected. Most are minor – like wrong uniform number or position

- listed – while others are photo errors or spelling mistakes.
- Four Pro Set "Player of the Month" cards were released during the 1990-91 season, honoring Pete Peeters, Tom Barrasso, Wayne Gretzky and Brett Hull. Not distributed in packs, these cards were given out at certain games that season.



1990-1991 ROOKIE SEASON
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS®

SEASON	GP	G	A	Pts
1989-1990 (CJ)	27	4	16	12
1990-1991 (CJ)	5	2	20	10

Jaromir played in both the world junior and senior championships. He led Kladno in goals and points and was the first Czech player to appear in NHL, goal without having to debut. He was the 195 player drafted in 1989. Even though Jaromir was the youngest to suit up for an NHL game this season, he scored three goals including game winner in the team's first all-star game in Pittsburgh's first 12 games. Pittsburgh named the left-handed shot to right wing. Jaromir is an accurate shooter, averaging 21 percent of his chances in the early going.

632 THE NHL & NHL PLAYERS

Pushing things further, Pro Set also released cards of the coaches – something that had not been done since 1974-75. Each NHL coach – save for Mike Keenan of the Chicago Blackhawks, who refused inclusion in the set – was pictured on their own card.

But perhaps the most interesting subset was one to feature referees and linesmen. No hockey game would be possible without on-ice officials, and Pro Set paid homage to the zebras with a 22-card subset of the men who don the stripes. A unique idea, as this was done once in baseball cards – the 1955 Bowman set featured Major League Baseball Umpires – but never in hockey. Longtime officials such as Kerry Frasier, Don Koharski and 2008 Hall of Fame inductee Ray Scapinello can be found in this set.

FINAL CALL

From referees to coaches, All-Stars and Hall of Famers, rookies, regulars and bit players, the 1990-91 Pro Set Hockey set did so much more than any set before or since. If you consider yourself a serious collector – and don't already own it – go and get this set now; the price won't break you, and the time you'll spend enjoying this piece of hockey card history is worth many times over what little you will spend on it.

Not only did printing in two series allow Pro Set to include many rookies from the 1990-91 campaign, it also gave them the opportunity to show traded players in their new uniforms – an almost alien concept in the world of hockey cards at that time. We did not have to wait until next season to see Denis Savard, Dale Hawerchuk, Chris Chelios or Joe Mullen in their new threads. A common practice these days, this was almost unheard of back then.

SUBSETS GALORE

Besides the regular player cards, 1990-91 Pro Set had a lot of subsets – smaller groupings of cards revolving around a theme, such as award winners. Some col-

lectors love these, while others cringe at the thought of having yet another trophy winner or scoring leader card in their collection. Pro Set featured many such cards, but colored outside the lines with some of their ideas.

For example, 40 cards showcased the 1990 All-Star game – one card for each player to don the oft-criticized black-and-orange "Halloween suit" of the midseason classic. Though not the first set to showcase players in their All-Star jerseys – O-Pee-Chee did this with their hockey sticker album sets from the 1980s – this was the first time that every player from the game was represented. This set a trend that other companies would later follow.

Several retired superstars were featured in either Career Point Leader or Hall of Fame subsets – a great way for younger collectors to learn about past greats like Gordie Howe, Phil and Tony Esposito, Mike Bossy, Bobby Clarke and Darryl Sittler, while also tying in the old with the new.



Pro Set Timeline

For a company that lasted less than five years, Pro Set was quite prolific in the amount of cards it made. Here's a quick rundown of a company that burned brightest and quickest.

1989

- Acquires license to make NFL football cards, making waves in the card industry with their exciting photography and slick design.

1990

- Enters the hockey card market with their huge – though error riddled – inaugural set.
- Adds soccer and golf to their growing list of sports card sets.

1991

- Resurrects the Parkhurst name, leasing it to brand a set of their premium hockey cards – the first time since 1964 that cards would bear the Parkhurst name and logo.
- Releases Pro Set Platinum hockey and football cards, as well as French versions of Pro Set and Parkhurst.
- Produces NASCAR trading cards
- Enters the non-sports card market, making card sets of movies ("The Little Mermaid", "Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey"), TV shows ("Yo! MTV Raps", "The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles") as well as a set of Operation Desert Storm Trading cards, among others.

1992

- Pro Set's last cards came out during the 1992-93 season. After that, the company went out of business.