

1997-98 Panini Set of 252

1997-98 Panini Set of 252 (loose stickers)

4 Key Rookie (RC) Stickers

Jarome Iginla, Ryan Smyth, Michael Peca and Steve Sullivan.

Sticker History

This was the second year in a row that Panini did not actively market it's NHL stickers to North America. The 1997 NHL Panini stickers collection was reduced to only 252 total stickers in the set. 252 stickers was the smallest NHL set produced in the 11 years and a sharp drop of 52 stickers from 1996. Until 2002, these stickers were nowhere to be found in Canada or the United States. In late 2002 I sourced out some unopened boxes from a dealer in Winnipeg that attained them when they were in Sweden. There were only 50 packages per box but the albums were pretty much non-existent (just like in 1996). Over the past 12 years, I have only found or seen 1 album from this series. Imagine that there are 1000's of 1995 Panini albums that can be had even today yet I've only ever seen 1 album from 1997 Panini. This set is difficult to assemble and not many collectors even know about this series as they were not sent out to wholesalers in the North American market. These stickers marketed mainly to the European hockey market.

Sticker Facts

The size of each full sticker is 5.4 cm X 7.6 cm (2.13 in X 3 in). There were 50 packages in each wax box which originally retailed for \$0.69 USD (or 6:- Swedish Kronor) per pack. Each package contained 6 stickers. The minimum number of packages needed to make a full set (assuming absolutely no doubles) is 42. The original album (\$1.25 USD or 10:- Swedish Kronor) cover featured Mats Sundin, Brendan Shanahan, Mark Messier, Saku Koivu, Dominik Hasek, Vladimir Konstantinov, Sandis Ozolnisk and Teemu Selanne. The 1997 Stanley Cup winners were the Detroit Red Wings with Goalie Mike Vernon winning the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoffs MVP.

Season Facts

The Detroit Red Wings break their 42 year curse by finally bringing the Stanley Cup back to Motor City. Joe Mullen becomes the 25th player to join the 500 goal club and Dave Andreychuk becomes the 26th player to join that elite group. Grant Fuhr would again rise to the occasion playing 73 games for the Blues. Brian Leetch won his 2nd career Norris Trophy leading all defensemen in points with 78. Teemu Selanne finished 2nd in league scoring with 109 points. Bryan Berard won the Calder Trophy for Rookie of the Year.

Expansion Notes

The Winnipeg Jets leave Canada for the desert and become the Phoenix Coyotes for the 1996-97 NHL season. The NHL announces future expansion plans with Nashville, Atlanta, Columbus and Minnesota joining the league in stages from the 1998-99 to the 2000-01 season.

Wayne Gretzky Notes

Gretzky signed as a free agent with the Rangers this season after a very brief stint with the Blues. Wayne would be reunited with long time friend Mark Messier. In December of 1996 Wayne passes the unprecedented 3000 point mark including playoffs (2639 points in the regular season plus 362 points in the playoffs). This would be the last season that Wayne would finish as a “plus” player with a +12. Gretzky finished the 1996-97 season with a 2.03 points per game ratio for his career. This series featured 1 Gretzky sticker. Wayne scored 25 goals and 72 assists for a total of 97 points in a full season of 82 games played. His points per game ratio for this season was 1.18.