

MLB vs. Upper Deck

By Jeff Figler

It came as a surprise to me that the trademark suit between Major League Baseball and Upper Deck was quickly settled recently. I really anticipated a long, drawn out affair, but it did not happen.

Recapping the sequence of events leading up to the settle-

ment, last October Major League Baseball granted exclusive license rights to Topps, a rival of Upper Deck. In defiance of MLB's action, Upper Deck proceeded to issue sets this year which included team logos and uniforms. MLB immediately sued Upper Deck, and the quick settlement last week

resulted. Upper Deck agreed to pay a "substantial sum of monies" for unlicensed cards released this year. In addition, Upper Deck agreed to pay \$2.4 million in license fees for 2009 cards.

It is very evident that MLB's license granting to Topps is the rule of the day. I do not really know how Upper Deck expected a different result, but possibly they expected some leniency, and hoped that the court system would allow the use of some team identification. But it didn't, and Upper Deck will have to live with the ruling.

Upper Deck has taken some blows in the last year, with Panini being granted exclusive rights from the NBA, and now Topps with MLB. There is still the NBA and NHL, but major league baseball cards were their bread and butter. Upper Deck can still produce baseball cards, but with restrictions imposed by MLB, including getting MLB approved to show players in baseball gear.

I'm not sure where Upper Deck will go from here, but they certainly were put in their place by MLB. Likely Upper Deck will still issue baseball cards, but I'm anxious to see how they look, without the MLB identification.

Jeff is a syndicated radio talk show host through Sports Byline. His two shows "Collecting with

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Lithograph features 50 greatest NBA players

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Adorning one of the walls in the sports gallery of the Figler Foundation Museum is a lithograph of the 50 Greatest Players of the NBA from 1946-1996. This isn't just any lithograph. No, no. This is the official lithograph of the 50 greatest players of the NBA in its first 50 years. It has an individual head shot of each player, as well as the signature of 49 of the 50 stars. The missing signature is of the incomparable Pete Maravich. "Pistol Pete" died of a heart attack in 1988. Playing a pickup basketball game, no less.

This treasure was distributed by Field of Dreams and authorized by the NBA.

The price tag on this piece has multiplied several times, and I even heard that this lithograph was being auctioned for upwards of \$100,000. Several of the players besides Maravich are now deceased, including George Mikan,

Dave DeBusschere, Paul Arizin, and of course, Wilt Chamberlain.

This lithograph is worth acquiring if you can. It is limited to 250 individually numbered pieces. For any Kobe Bryant fan, he is not part of this litho, as the 1996-97 season was his rookie year in the NBA.

Chances are you will see Bryant, along with Dwayne Wade and LeBron James in the lithograph of the greatest NBA players of the next 50 years.

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