

Collecting The Captain

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10 Important Things To Know About Collecting Derek Jeter

by Dave Thorn

Dave Thorn is the founder of Small Traditions LLC, an online sports and Americana auction company that conducts monthly auctions in which selling is completely free and buyers pay the fees instead of sellers. This month's [Exclusive Derek Jeter September Farewell Auction](#) features the key highlights from one of the most admired Derek Jeter collections in the hobby. With so many significant Jeter items coming to market this month, here are 10 important things to know about collecting Derek Jeter, especially for those who want to better understand his many different types of cards produced over the last 23 years — rookies, proofs, parallels, oddballs, inserts, autographs, Refractors, etc. — and which are the most valuable.



1. Derek Jeter has accomplished all of the following (see #s 2-10) without any remote suspicion of using Performance Enhancing Drugs. Quite the opposite, the mission of Jeter's [Turn 2](#)

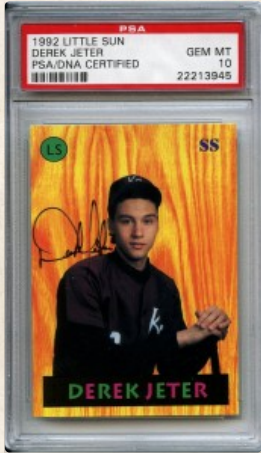
[Foundation](#) is to "motivate young people to turn away from drugs and alcohol and 'TURN 2' healthy lifestyles." Just as his perennial postseason heroics in the late 90s helped baseball's popularity to recover from the embarrassment of the strike-shortened 1994 season, **Jeter's consistently clean and classy style of play has helped to preserve the integrity of the National Pastime throughout its steroid era.**



2. Some of his pinstripe predecessors might have won more World Series rings than Jeter's 5 — Yogi has 10, DiMaggio 9, Mantle and Ruth both 7 — but Mr. November has more [postseason batting records](#) than any other player, not just in the Yankees' books but in all of baseball history. Keeping in mind that baseball only played one round of playoffs until 1969 and that it now plays three, **Jeter is the all-time postseason hitting leader in ten categories**, including hits (200), runs (111), total bases (302), singles (143), doubles (32), triples (5), games played (158), at bats (650), and plate appearances (734). He ranks third in postseason home runs (20), fourth in postseason RBI (61), fifth in postseason walks (66), and sixth in postseason stolen bases (18). His postseason numbers represent an entire season's worth of games, and a very good season at that. And for those who say hooey to postseason records, then consider that **Derek is also one of just two players to ever accumulate 3,000 hits, 250 home runs, 300 stolen bases, and 1,200 RBI in the history of the game.** The other player? Willie Mays.



3. **Derek is one of just 28 players in baseball's elite 3,000 hit club.** He achieved his 3,000th hit on the biggest stage in baseball and with more pomp than any other player before him, hitting a home run off one of the best pitchers in baseball, going 5-5 on the day, and driving in the game's winning run, a performance that will be remembered and replayed forever.



4. And the hits didn't stop there. This summer, Derek passed the immortal Honus Wagner for most hits ever by a shortstop, and then **he passed**



Adrian "Cap" Anson to earn the #6 spot on baseball's all-time hits leaders list. Those who will remain ahead of him in the top five are Tris Speaker, Stan Musial, Hank Aaron, Ty Cobb, and Pete Rose. That's not just good company he's in; it's the greatest ever. What is perhaps most remarkable about Jeter's standing among these players, however, is that Speaker and Musial both played 22 seasons, Aaron played 23, and Cobb and Rose both played 24. Jeter, just 20. His way, and on his terms.

5. In short, Derek Jeter is one of baseball's all-time greats, and we've been more than lucky to watch his career. His famous "flip" play in the bottom of the seventh inning in Game 3 of the 2001 ALDS, his gutsy "dive" into the stands against the Red Sox, and his clutch

hitting and never-ever-hesitating hustle will be highlights for the eternity of baseball. He stands in direct lineage to those who wore single-digit NY Yankee jerseys before him: 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, and 1. Like all these legends in pinstripes, **Derek's legacy will only continue to grow after he retires, bridging the generation gap as only baseball can do, as millions of fans face the existential question: will there really ever be another like him?**



6. Drafted straight out of Kalamazoo Central High School and quickly becoming one of the most touted prospects in Yankee history, **Derek can be found on 325 different baseball cards produced between his draft year of 1992 and his rookie season of 1996**, and there is

considerable debate about whether or not all of these cards should be considered rookie cards. His traditional rookie card year, has always been 1993, but collecting has changed in recent years, and most collectors are now more inclined to pursue his many more challenging cards produced during his ROY-winning season of 1996, when we watched with wonder as the rookie helped lead the Yankees to their first World Series Championship in nearly two decades, than to collect only his cards from 1993, when he batted .295 in his first full season of Single A, still three seasons away from his official MLB rookie season.

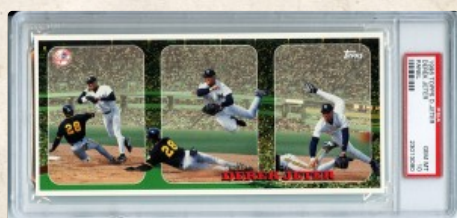
7. **Jeter's rookie years of 1992 to 1996 correspond to the hobby development of insert or "chase"**

cards — special, limited edition cards randomly inserted into packs, many of which were super-short-printed variations, or parallel versions, of a player's regular or base card — and his rookie season of 1996 would be the first year that saw products with significantly *more than* the two basic tiers of print runs that had thus far characterized the insert card development of the early to mid 1990s. Instead of products with just a regularly issued card and a single parallel insert of that regular issue — like *Finest Refractors*, *Topps Gold*, and *Upper Deck Electric Diamond*, for example — there were now products by *Bowman*, *Leaf*, and *Select Certified* that had as many as a half dozen different parallels, each one produced in smaller quantities than the last, some with print runs as small as just 30. Scarcer than even the T206 Wagner, cards like the famous 1996 *Select Certified Mirror Gold* are also some of the most beautiful cards ever made. Their development happened during Derek's rookie season, which makes collecting his rookie



season cards that much more challenging and fun.

8. If 1992-1996 is the birth of modern insert cards, then 1997-1999 is their renaissance or golden age. During the late '90s, modern card manufacturers developed several more innovations that now, two decades later, still dominate the industry. These innovations included game-used cards, serial-numbered cards, and the development of the ever coveted 1/1 or one-of-one masterpiece cards, when manufacturers produced an ultimate parallel of a particular card limited to just one single copy made. Finally, let's also not forget the incredible die-cut cards developed during the period, which may be common encounters in packs today, but in the late 90s they were among the most special pulls imaginable, some of which have remained non-existent in PSA 10 Gem Mint condition and were so intricate and cutting-edge — *ha!* — that they probably always will.



9. Just as the development of insert cards corresponded with Derek's rookie years of 1992 to 1996, this distinct period of later 1990s inserts directly corresponds to the New York Yankees dynasty years of 1996 to 2000. Game-used and serial-numbered, autograph cards, and even 1/1 cards, are now extremely common in today's products, but in the late 90s they were new and exciting, as was the printing technology that had made them possible, and they remain among the most

collected cards in the hobby. For Yankees fans and for those who collect The Captain, the appeal of collecting cards from these years is therefore twofold, since so many of the innovative cards from these years were groundbreaking, and since they also document one of the last real dynasties in the history of the game.



10. Finally, let's not forget that Derek has played his entire 20-year career with the most successful franchise in all of sports history and with all of us watching as closely as New York City watches anything, and he's done it all with class, integrity, and grace. For this reason, wherever the Yankees have traveled during his farewell season, millions of fans have stood in ovation, and thousands more have held signs saying "Thank You." But thank you for what? For the memories? Sure. And for the championships? Yes, of course. **But the thanks we owe Derek Jeter have as much if not more to do with those three little words — class, integrity, and grace — than with anything.** I'm not even sure what those things are these days, but I know that I've seen them whenever I've watched Derek play, and for that I will always be grateful.

Derek's retirement announcement earlier this year took many of us by surprise, but it was in reality the ultimate classy act. Knowing that this would be his last season has helped him to pace and to preserve himself, and I'd certainly rather watch him

with the knowledge of his retirement than to see him slowly decline over the next several seasons, even if those additional years could have brought him greater personal achievements, namely, the all-time hits record. But Derek doesn't play for personal records, and he never has. He plays for wins, and that's how he'll be remembered. Although there were others before him and there will be many more to follow, years and years from now, he'll be remembered best by his most common nickname: The Captain.



To consign your Derek Jeter and other New York Yankees items to Small Traditions November Holiday Auction, and to learn about the company's popular Cost-Free Grading and Collection Management Services, please call 303.832.1975 or write info@smalltraditions.com, and be sure to follow the company on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#) for more updates.

This entry was posted in [Autos](#), [Inserts](#), [The Dynasty Years](#), [The Later Years](#), [The RC Years](#) and tagged [1993 SP Foil Derek Jeter](#), [1994 Collector's Choice](#), [1994 Collector's Choice Gold Signature](#), [1996 Select Certified](#), [1996 Select Certified Mirror Gold](#), [90s insert cards](#), [Babe Ruth](#), [Beckett Grading Services](#), [BGS 10 Pristine](#), [BGS 9.5 Gem Mint](#), [chase card](#), [Derek Jeter](#), [Derek Jeter RC](#), [Derek Jeter rookie card](#), [Insert](#), [insert card](#), [Jeter](#), [Lou Gehrig](#), [Mickey Mantle](#), [Mirror Blue](#), [Mirror Gold](#), [modern cards](#), [New York Yankees](#), [parallel card](#), [PSA 10 Gem Mint](#), [RC](#), [rookie card](#), [the hobby](#), [Topps](#), [Upper Deck](#), [Yankees](#) on [September 21, 2014](#).

Derek Jeter's Cardboard Gold

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With the recent record-breaking sales of Derek Jeter's 1996 Select Certified Mirror Gold "rookie card" for [\\$13,479](#) and [\\$16,995](#) in PSA Mint 9 and SGC 96 Mint condition, respectively, I thought it might be fun to dig up and explore some other significant examples of gold-themed Jeter cards.

From his traditional rookie card year of 1993, Derek can be found on gold-themed parallels of both his regular Topps and Upper Deck rookie cards. While his regular (non-gold) Topps rookie card fetches [between \\$100 and \\$140](#) in PSA 10 Gem Mint condition, his 1993 Topps Gold parallel PSA 10 sells for [\\$300 to \\$400](#). Topps Gold parallels were produced between 1992 and 1994, and in 1993 they were seeded 1 per wax pack, 3 per rack pack, 5 per jumbo pack, 10 per factory set, and 1,000 per every 12,000-count vending case. To date, PSA has graded 12,754 examples of Derek's regular 1993 Topps #98 rookie card versus 3,142 total of his Topps Gold parallel, awarding [1,247 PSA 10 Gem Mints](#) to the regular and just [196 to the Gold](#), which is about the same number of PSA 10 Gem Mint examples of Michael Jordan's famous 1986 Fleer rookie card on record at PSA ([190](#)).



Jeter's 1993 Upper Deck rookie card parallel is a little more subtle, as the only difference between the regular version and the parallel is the color of the foil used for the Upper Deck authentic hologram on back. The so-called "Gold Hologram" parallels were distributed exclusively in factory set form. For every set case of 15 factory sets, one set was struck with the coveted Gold Hologram on back, and PSA 10 Gem Mint examples — there are currently only [26 of them on record](#), versus 352 of Derek's regular 1993 Upper Deck rookie card — continue to sell for around \$1,000.



Derek has precisely 22 different cards from his traditional rookie card year of 1993, and the only other gold-themed issues are the elusive 1993 Front Row Gold Collection (with a *supposed* print run of 10,000 but only 21 PSA 10s so far) and the far more common 1993 Classic Best Gold. He also has a pair of gold parallels from among his 18 different cards produced during his draft year of 1992: the condition sensitive Front Row Gold parallel (with a print run of 5,000 and just 10 PSA 10s) and the Classic Four Sport Gold (print run 9,500 and 48 PSA 10s). From his nearly 40 different cards in 1994, there are three more gold parallels — again a Classic Best Gold, also the highly coveted Collector's Choice

Gold Signature, shown here, and the Topps SS Prospects Gold parallel — **but the real Midas madness for Jeter cards doesn't fully materialize until 1995 and 1996, at the peak of the late 1990s insert mania that would come to define the period and change the collectibles industry forever.**

In 1995, Derek can be found on seven different gold-themed insert and insert parallel cards, perhaps the most attractive and undervalued of which is the [1995 Bowman Gold Foil](#) parallel, a stunning card to behold in person. Even more stunning, however, is the 1995 Select Certified Mirror Gold. Unlike its famously short-printed 1996 successor, however, the 1995 Mirror Gold is a common insert parallel (or parallel insert, to be more precise) seeded 1 in every 5 packs. Using insertion rates, [BaseballCardPedia.com guesstimates](#) that



approximately 1,900 copies were produced. The cards boast a combination of gold foil and a prismatic chromium surface similar to Topps' refractor technology, and they're so stunning that it's no wonder the Score/Pinnacle brass decided to limit the following year's 1996 version of its Select Certified Mirror Gold cards to an unprecedented, industry-changing print run of just 30 exalted copies of each card produced.

Other gold-themed Jeter cards from 1995 include a handful of additional Upper Deck parallels from different products plus an Ultra Golden Prospect Gold Medallion parallel produced by Fleer, but by his Rookie of the Year season of 1996, you can find Jeter on nearly 20 different gold-themed insert and insert parallel cards, most of which are short-printed parallel versions of Jeter's regularly issued cards that have been treated with some sort of gold foil or other gold theme in order to help distinguish them from the regular versions.





The most famous and valuable of all of Derek Jeter's cards produced during his Rookie of the Year season of 1996 — or from any year, for that matter — is of course the 1996 Select Certified Mirror Gold, a PSA 10 Gem Mint example of which will head to auction in September in Small Traditions' Exclusive Derek Jeter Farewell event. For more information on this premium event, or to consign your high-end Derek Jeter and other Yankees items, please call 303.832.1975 or write info@smalltraditions.com.

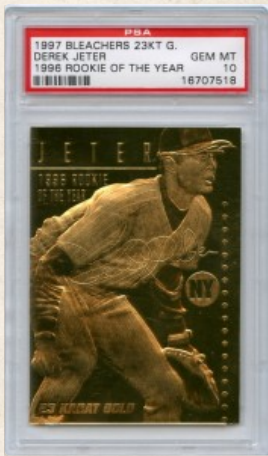


If September is too long to wait to satisfy your itch for Jeter gold, however, then try [searching all the 202 different Jeter cards in Small Traditions' current Monthly Masterpieces Plus #22 Auction](#), where you will find a staggering number of gold-themed insert and insert parallels, including strong PSA Mint 9 examples of both the 1997 and 1998 evolved versions (or successors) of Select Certified's treasured Mirror Gold cards, now in '97 and '98 called "Platinum Gold" parallels, also short-printed to infinitesimal print runs of just 30 copies made. Unlike the 1996 version, both examples up for auction this month are serial-numbered on back, and both are stamped 01 out of just 30 printed, making them coveted 1/1s or one-of-ones according to many collectors.



01/30

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention another and more literal class of Jeter gold cards, those that are actually constructed of gold. While 23-24KT gold-leaf cards like the admittedly condition sensitive (Pop 3 PSA 10) 1997 Bleachers card shown below might be more over-produced gimmickry than true scarcity, gold-leaf cards like these, also produced in large quantities of 10,000 to 50,000 over the years by Upper Deck, should not overshadow the much more desirable Precious Metals cards famously produced by Donruss in 1997 and 1998. These immaculate cards are constructed of 1 gram of fine gold, and they were limited to just 100 copies made in 1997 and only 50 in 1998. A BGS 10 Pristine example of [the 1997 issue sold for \\$1,994](#) in Small Traditions' inaugural December. Premium Holiday auction last year, and the much scarcer 1998 BGS 10 example shown here will hopefully find its way into Small Traditions' Exclusive Derek Jeter Farewell Auction in September. They are, quite literally, Jeter gold, and they remain among the most coveted Jeter cards in existence.

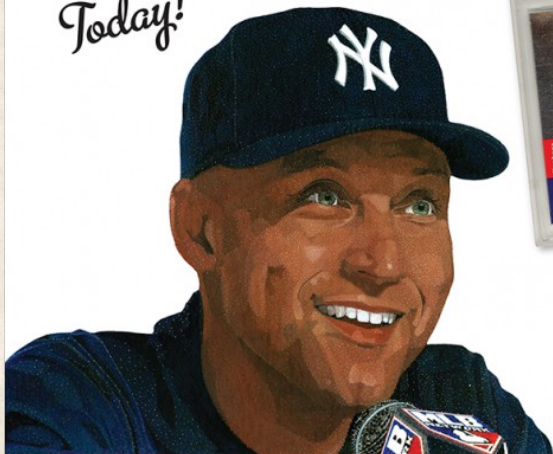


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Collecting The Captain

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The Top 10 Things To Know About Collecting Derek Jeter

by Dave Thorn

1. Derek Jeter has accomplished all of the following (see #s 2-10) without any remote suspicion of using Performance Enhancing Drugs. Quite the opposite, the [mission of Jeter's Turn 2 Foundation](#) is to "motivate young people to turn away from drugs and alcohol and 'TURN 2' healthy lifestyles."

2. Derek is one of just 28 players in baseball's elite 3,000 hit club. He [achieved his 3,000th hit](#) on the biggest stage in baseball and with more pomp than any other player before him, hitting a home run off one of the best pitchers in baseball, going 5-5 on the day, and driving in the game's winning run, a performance that will be remembered and replayed for centuries to come.

3. But the hits didn't stop there. To date, if Derek collects just 66 more hits in his final season, he will pass Honus Wagner for most hits ever by a shortstop and the 7th most in baseball history. 16 more hits after that, and he'll pass Adrian "Cap" Anson for 6th all-time. Those who would remain ahead of him on [baseball's all-time hits leaders list](#) are Tris Speaker, Stan Musial, Hank Aaron, Ty Cobb, and Pete Rose. That's not just good company he's in; it's the greatest ever.



4. Some of his pinstripe predecessors might have won more World Series rings than Jeter's 5 — Yogi has 10, DiMaggio 9, Mantle and Ruth both 7 — but "Captain Clutch," or "Mr. November," has more [postseason batting records](#) than any player in history. He is the all-time postseason leader in hits (200), runs (111), total bases (302), singles (143), doubles (32), triples (5), games played (158), at bats (650), and plate appearances (734). He ranks third in postseason home runs (20), fourth in postseason RBI (61), fifth in postseason walks (66), and sixth in postseason stolen bases (18). His postseason stats represent an entire season's worth of games and surpass those of most players' careers.

5. In short, Derek Jeter is one of baseball's all-time greats, and we've been lucky to watch his career. His [famous "flip" play](#) in the bottom of the seventh inning in Game 3 of the 2001 ALDS, his [gutsy "dive" into the stands](#) against the Red Sox, and [his clutch hitting](#) and never-ever-hesitating hustle will be highlights for the eternity of baseball. He stands in direct lineage with those who wore single digit NY Yankee jerseys before him: 9, 8, 7, 6 (above all others), 5, 4, 3, and

1. Maris, Berra and Dickey, Mantle, Torre, DiMaggio, Gehrig, Ruth, and Martin. Like these other legends, Derek's legacy will only continue to grow after he retires.

6. One of the most touted prospects in Yankee history, Derek can be found on 325 different baseball cards produced between his draft year of 1992 and his rookie season of 1996. His traditional rookie card year has always been 1993, but collecting has changed in recent years, and most advanced collectors are now more inclined to pursue his many more challenging cards produced during his ROY-winning season of 1996, when we watched with wonder as the rookie helped lead the Yankees to their first World Series Championship in nearly two decades, than to collect only his cards from 1993, when he batted .295 in his first full season of Single A, still three years away from his official Major League rookie season.

7. Jeter's rookie years of 1992 to 1996 correspond to the hobby development of insert or "chase" cards — special, limited edition cards randomly inserted into packs, many of which were short-printed variations, or parallels, of a player's regular card — and his rookie season of 1996 would be the first year that saw products with more than the two basic tiers of print runs that had thus far characterized the insert development of the early to mid 90s. Instead of products with just a regularly issued card and a single parallel insert of that regular issue, like Finest Refractors, Topps Gold, and Upper Deck Electric Diamond, for example, there were now products by Bowman, Leaf, and Select Certified that had as many as half a dozen different parallels, each one produced in smaller quantities than the last, some with print runs as small as just 30 total parallel



copies produced. These super short printed (SSP) cards can be scarcer than even the T206 Wagner — the coveted 1996 Select Certified Mirror Gold, in particular — and they are also some of the most beautiful cards ever made. Their development happened during Derek's rookie season, which makes collecting his rookie season cards that much more challenging and fun.



8. If 1992-1996 is the birth of modern insert cards, then 1997-1999 is their renaissance or golden age. During these years, modern card manufacturers developed several more innovations that now, two decades later, dominate the industry. These innovations include game-used cards, serial-numbered cards, and the development of the ever coveted 1/1 or one-of-one masterpiece cards, when manufacturers produce an ultimate parallel of a particular issue limited to just one single copy.

9. Just as the development of insert cards corresponded with Derek's rookie years of 1992 to 1996, the renaissance period of later 1990s inserts directly corresponds to the New York Yankees dynasty years of 1996 to 2000. Game-used and serial-numbered autograph cards, and even 1/1 cards, are now extremely common in today's products, but in the late 90s they were new and exciting, as was the printing technology that made them possible, and they remain among the most collected cards in the hobby. For Yankees fans and for those who collect The Captain, the appeal of collecting cards from these years is therefore twofold, since the cards

from these years are groundbreaking, and they also document one of the last real dynasties in the history of the game.

10. Derek Jeter has played his entire 20-year career with the most successful franchise in all of sports and with all of us watching as closely as New York City watches anything, and he's done it all with class, integrity, and grace. For this reason, wherever he goes during his final "farewell" season, millions of fans stand in ovation, and thousands more hold signs saying "Thank You." But thank you for what? For the memories? Sure. And for the championships? Yes, of course. But the thanks we owe Derek Jeter have as much if not more to do with these three little words — class, integrity, and grace — than with anything. I'm not even exactly sure what these things are these days, but I know that I see them when I watch Derek play, and for that I am grateful.

Derek's retirement announcement earlier this year took many of us by surprise, but it was in reality the ultimate classy act. Knowing that this would be his last season has helped him to pace and to preserve himself, at least so far, and I'd certainly rather watch him with the knowledge of his retirement than to see him slowly decline over the next several seasons, even if those additional years could have brought him greater personal achievements, like the all-time hits record. But Derek doesn't play for personal records, and he never has. He plays for wins, and that's how he'll be remembered. Although there were others before him and there will be many more to follow, years and years from now, he'll be remembered best by his most common name: The Captain.

Dave Thorn is the founder of Small Traditions, an online sports and Americana auction company that conducts monthly auctions at its website, smalltraditions.com, where selling is completely free and buyers pay the fees instead of sellers. The company has recently acquired one of the hobby's most significant Derek Jeter collections, which it will be auctioning off in several stages, beginning with its [current May Monthly Masterpieces Plus Auction](#), continuing throughout the summer, and then culminating with a special Derek Jeter Farewell Auction in September. Call 303.832.1975 or write info@smalltraditions.com to consign, and follow the company on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#) for more updates.



This entry was posted in [Inserts](#), [The Dynasty Years](#), [The RC Years](#) and tagged [1993 SP](#), [1993 SP Foil](#), [1996 Select Certified](#), [1996 Select Certified Mirror Gold](#), [90s insert cards](#), [All-Time Hits Leader](#), [autographs](#), [Cap Anson](#), [Derek Jeter](#), [Derek Jeter rookie card](#), [dynasty](#), [Hank Aaron](#), [Honus Wagner](#), [Insert](#), [insert cards](#), [Jeter](#), [Mirror Gold](#), [New York Yankees](#), [Pete Rose](#), [Postseason](#), [Postseason Batting Leader](#), [Postseason Records](#), [RC rookie card](#), [Stan Musial](#), [Tris Speaker](#), [Ty Cobb](#), [World Series](#), [Yankees](#) on [May 23, 2014](#).

The 1993 Topps #98 Derek Jeter RC Rookie Card

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The 1993 Topps Derek Jeter Draft Picks Rookie Card is one of the most iconic Topps baseball cards ever produced and will one day be recognized as readily as the 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle. The front of the card features the lanky 19 year-old prospect in a navy blue Yankees jersey with pinstriped pants against a vibrant grass-green backdrop in a baseball diamond design that often shows small to moderate traces of print defects, while the back of the card shows Derek's high school stats and reports that the 1992 Gatorade and 1992 USA Today High School Player of the Year graduated with a 3.82 grade point average. With a generous white border, the card is prone to centering issues, since even a slight centering shift will drastically affect the size of the [complementary](#) borders. For these and other reasons, PSA has awarded 1,082 Gem Mint 10s (that sell for about \$100 each) from a sizable pool of [11,527 submissions](#), while BGS has recognized 695 Gem Mint 9.5s and just 3 prominent Pristine 10s from 8,661 submissions. At this rate, a BGS 10 Pristine example of the 1993 Topps Derek Jeter RC is nearly three times as difficult to realize as Jeter's infamous 1993 SP Foil rookie card in PSA 10 Gem Mint condition, which reports 10 Gem Mint 10 examples from [10,426 submissions](#) and sells for about

\$25,000. For a review of the BGS 10 Pristine grade versus the BGS 9.5 Gem Mint and PSA 10 Gem Mint grades, please [click here](#) to read our "Explain It to Me" blog post on the subject.



Variations, or parallels, of the iconic 1993 Topps Derek Jeter RC include a Gold version, an Inaugural Rockies and an Inaugural Marlins version, a miniature "Micro" version, and a seldom encountered blank-back version. The Gold version is a standard parallel that features gold foil over the nameplate and the Topps logo, and according to [www.baseballcardpedia.com](#) they were inserted one per wax pack, three per rack pack, five per jumbo pack, ten per factory set, 36 per 400 count collection box, and 1,000 per 12,000 count vending case. As of the date of this composition, there exist 163 PSA 10s from [2,866 submissions](#) that have steadily increased in price over the last couple of years, now fetching between \$400 and \$500 in auction, while at BGS there are just 57 Gem Mint 9.5s and 2 masterpiece Pristine 10s from 2,097 submissions. The 1993 Topps Gold Derek Jeter Rookie Card is neither rare nor extremely condition sensitive, yet demand for the Midas-touched parallel continues to increase at a steady rate.

For collectors seeking true scarcity, at least relative to the 1993 Topps standard and Gold issues, there are the inaugural Rockies and Marlins versions, both of which appear identical to the standard issue except for the addition of a simple

gold embossed stamp for each respective team. They were only available in factory set form at each team's home stadium, where each team had the option of receiving as many as 10,000 sets, but actual production was reported at just 5,000 of the Rockies and 4,000 of the Marlins. To date, only 44 and 46 PSA 10s have been realized from 380 and 241 submissions, respectively, with just 22 and 29 BGS 9.5s from 168 and 126 submissions to Beckett and just a single BGS 10 Pristine for the Marlins version and none for the Rockies. The Micro version was also available only in factory sets, and they are also somewhat scarce, at least in comparison to the regular issue, and they are extremely difficult to find with accurate enough centering and image registration to realize top grades, with PSA awarding just 12 PSA 10s from [247 submissions](#) and BGS awarding 6 BGS 9.5s and zero BGS 10 Pristines from 77 submissions. The Blank Back version, finally, is most likely the product of printers scrap that somehow made it into circulation, and although it is not an officially recognized issue, it is the sort of scarce variation that advanced collectors covet.



In terms of price, both of the Inaugural versions sell for an average of about \$400 in PSA 10 Gem Mint condition. They are cheaper than the Gold version in top grades but anywhere from two to three times the price of the Gold version in raw condition and should therefore be considered a bargain in top grades at this point, especially since they have sold for as high as \$600 to \$700. The first few Micro versions that surfaced in PSA 10 condition a few years ago sold for \$1,200 to \$1,300 but now average between \$500 and \$600 in PSA 10 and BGS 9.5 Gem Mint condition, while the first BGS 10 Pristine will likely sell for anywhere from \$2,000 to \$5,000 when (and if) one ever surfaces, which is unlikely given its condition sensitivity. There are no records for the sale of the two BGS 10 Pristine Gold versions nor for the lone BGS 10 Pristine Marlins version, but the first ever BGS 10 Pristine standard issue sold for a \$1,999 Buy-It-Now price on eBay in April of 2013, and the second BGS 10 Pristine then sold for \$3,750 on eBay just one month later. The third BGS 10 Pristine is currently available with no reserve in [Small Traditions Monthly Masterpieces Plus #10 Auction](#), which ends Saturday, July 6th, and who knows what price will be realized when the final hammer drops.

As a final note, the 1993 Topps Derek Jeter Rookie Card is one of about 23 different Derek Jeter cards produced in 1993, and although Jeter was drafted in 1992 and has another 17 or so cards from that year, and even though his rookie season was not until 1996, when he won the American League Rookie of the Year Award, the 1993 issues have traditionally been recognized as his official rookie cards. The reason for this is because 1993 marked the first year of issue by the industry leading manufacturers, including Topps and its Bowman brand, Score and its Pinnacle brand, and of course Upper Deck and its ultra high-end SP brand. At Small Traditions, however, we recognize all Derek Jeter cards produced between his draft year of 1992 and his ROY season of 1996 as official rookie cards, and according to our latest count, there are almost 340 of them composing the Derek Jeter Master Rookie Card checklist. How many do you have?

Happy Collecting,

Dave Thorn

This entry was posted in [The RC Years](#) and tagged [1952 Topps Mickey Mantle](#), [1993 SP Foil Derek Jeter](#), [1993 SP RC](#), [1993 Topps](#), [1993 Topps Rookie Card](#), [BGS](#), [BGS 10 Pristine](#), [BGS 9.5 Gem Mint](#), [Derek Jeter](#), [Derek Jeter 1993 SP](#), [Derek Jeter BGS 10](#), [Derek Jeter Cards](#), [Derek Jeter PSA 10](#), [Derek Jeter RC](#), [Derek Jeter rookie card](#), [Derek Jeter Rookie Cards](#), [Derek Jeter Topps](#), [Jeter](#), [PSA](#), [PSA 10 Gem Mint](#), [Topps Gold](#), [Topps Marlins](#), [Topps Micro](#), [Topps Rockies](#) on [June 26, 2013](#).

Setting The Record Straight: The 1994 Collector's Choice White Letter Variation(s)

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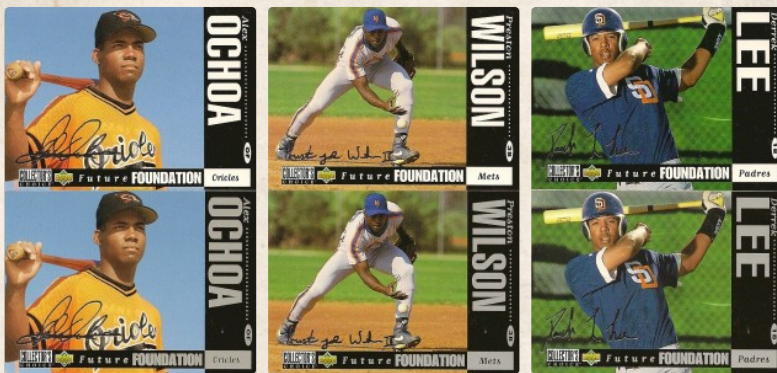
I remember several years ago when I was in graduate school, learning eBay for the first time and selling off my card collection to raise some extra money for groceries, books, and beer. I listed a group of Alex Rodriguez cards that I had thought would fetch \$20, maybe \$30. In the end, the group sold for more than \$400 because it contained a rare variation of Alex's 1994 Collector's Choice Future Foundation Silver Signature rookie card. The variation had something to do with the color of the letter "A" on the back of the card, commencing Alex's brief biographical write-up. It was supposed to be gray, but the lone letter was white instead, and as far as I remember, the rest of the card featured the standard Silver Signature design, meaning that the text on the front of the card was all in gray, not white. Perhaps I am remembering incorrectly, but

more than 10 years later I have yet to encounter another 1994 Collector's Choice White Letter Variation exactly like that.



The White Letter Variation for which collectors pay such serious premiums these days is different. Like the Derek Jeter card pictured to the left, the White Letter Variation shows the same silver foil facsimile signature, but the rest of the text on front is all in white. As you can plainly see from the other examples pictured below, every player in the Future Foundations subset can be found with this variation to his Silver Signature card, which is a parallel to the standard issue that does not feature any facsimile signature whatsoever. The Silver Signature parallels were seeded one per every wax pack and three per every jumbo pack. There also exists a Gold Signature parallel that was seeded one per every wax or jumbo box or five per every factory set. The Gold Signature parallels are some of the most coveted cards from 1994, and although some websites like baseballcardpedia.com reference them, it is unknown whether the Gold Signatures can be found with a White Letter Variation. The Silver Signature

White Letter Variations, however, do exist, and they are extremely rare, with ARod and Jeter examples selling for multiple thousands of dollars in top grades, and even common players who never played more than a few Major League games can fetch as much as \$30 to \$50 in raw condition.



There is perhaps no other variation from the 1990s more misunderstood than the 1994 Collector's Choice Silver Signature White Letter Variation. For several years, The Standard Catalog of Baseball Cards has included the following statement in its pricing for the 1994 Collector's Choice set: "#647 Alex Rodriguez White Letters. Some ARod Silver Signature parallels were mistakenly printed on base cards with his name and other details on front and back printed in white rather than gray." Currently, it is the only price guide that acknowledges the variation, but because it only acknowledges the ARod variation, Professional Sports Authenticator, or PSA, the industry leader in graded sports cards, refuses to acknowledge that the variation exists for other players besides ARod, most importantly Derek Jeter:



According to PSA, in order to register a variation of an issue, PSA's research department requires the submission of said variation to be accompanied by printed materials that directly reference the variation, and since The Standard Catalog only acknowledges the ARod, PSA has refused to hear the overwhelming collector demand that other 1994 Collector's Choice Future Foundation Silver Signature White Letter Variation cards be distinguished from their standard Silver Signature cards. Casual readers and even many long-time hobbyists may not understand the significance of this. No big deal, right? Wrong! To designate a separate line item for the White Letter Variations in

PSA's population report would essentially create a new Derek Jeter rookie card for Set Registry collectors to pursue. Moreover, creating a separate category for the variation would also highlight its scarcity. Since so few are known to exist in any condition, in another ten or twenty years it will most likely stand as one of the single rarest Derek Jeter rookie cards to encounter in PSA 10 Gem Mint condition, commanding prices as high as \$10,000, or more.



Although it is not a print resource, Baseballcardpedia offers a somewhat better statement on the White Letter Variation. "A legitimate variation on the Alex Rodriguez card (#647) was verified several years after release. The standard card features the "A" from Alex on the card back text in grey/silver whereas the variation features his name in white. It's believed that the A-Rod "White A" variation is a significantly tougher card, but exact estimates of its scarcity are not known. In subsequent years, other cards (such as Johnny Damon) were also verified to have this white letter variation - thus it's generally believed that the entire Future Foundations subset was produced with white (and standard grey)

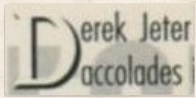
letter variations." This acknowledgement, however, sounds more like the variation I described in my introductory anecdote than the variations clearly pictured in this post. Although they supply no visual proof, further down in their listing for the 1994 Collector's Choice set, Baseballcardpedia also states: "Like in the base set, "White Letter" variations also exist for the Gold and Silver Signature parallels of the Future Foundations subset." Gold Signature White Letter variations! What?

Here is the BGS population report for the 1994 Collector's Choice Derek Jeter variations, including an erroneous category for a standard, non-facsimile signature White Letter Variation:

Set	Player	#	7.0	7.5	8.0	8.5	9.0	9.5	10	Total
1994 Collector's Choice	Derek Jeter	644	2	6	11	28	14	6	0	67
1994 Collector's Choice Gold Signature	Derek Jeter	644	0	0	2	9	12	1	0	24
1994 Collector's Choice Silver Signature	Derek Jeter	644	1	2	8	15	19	2	0	50
1994 Collector's Choice Silver Signature White Letter Variation	Derek Jeter	644	0	0	2	3	1	1	0	7
1994 Collector's Choice White Letter Variation	Derek Jeter	644	1	4	8	34	60	13	0	124

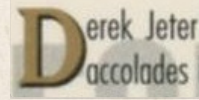
To make things even more confusing, [Beckett Grading Services](#), or BGS, the industry leader in modern graded sports cards, mistakenly created a separate grading category for the Derek Jeter White Letter Variation of the standard, non-Silver Signature issue in addition to a separate grading category for the Silver Signature White Letter Variation. While we certainly appreciate Beckett's effort to distinguish the Silver Signature White Letter Variation, to set the record straight, every regular non-Silver Signature issue shows a white letter on back, so don't be fooled into buying one of these under the impression that it is the Silver Signature White Letter Variation.





Variations, parallels, printer's proofs, errors, and misprints comprise the core of advanced collecting. Most of the 514 cards comprising the legendary T206 Tobacco set, for example, can be found with 16 different advertisement backs, the rarest of which command small fortunes at market. The 1949 and 1954 Bowman sets and the landmark 1952 Topps set are also rife with variations. So, too, is the 1994 Collector's Choice set.

Exactly how many, however, remains a mystery. Clearly, there is the Silver Signature White Letter Variation, pictured multiple times in this post, and this variation should absolutely be recognized by all grading companies. Perhaps a better name for this variation, however, should be the Silver Signature "White Lettering" Variation, because who knows if The Standard Catalog and my graduate school memories aren't both correct. Maybe there is a Silver Signature variation that looks exactly like the Silver Signature parallel except for the lone letter on back appearing in white instead of gray. An accurate name for this variation would then indeed be the Silver Signature "White Letter" Variation, as opposed to the "White Lettering" Variation. Do these two different variations also exist for the Gold Signature parallel, that is, a Gold Signature White Letter Variation as well as a Gold Signature White Lettering Variation? I've never seen either, but if they do, they'd be worth a boatload, and I sure hope to find one someday.



Happy Collecting,

Dave Thorn at Small Traditions

This entry was posted in [Inserts](#), [The RC Years](#) and tagged [1949 Bowman](#), [1952 Topps](#), [1954 Bowman](#), [1994 Collector's Choice](#), [1994 Collector's Choice Gold Signature](#), [1994 Collector's Choice Gold Signature White Letter](#), [1994 Collector's Choice Silver Signature](#), [1994 Collector's Choice Silver Signature White Letter](#), [advertisement backs](#), [Alex Rodriguez](#), [Alex Rodriguez RC](#), [Alex Rodriguez Rookie Card](#), [American Beauty](#), [Beckett Grading Services](#), [BGS](#), [BGS 9.5 Gem Mint](#), [Collecting](#), [Derek Jeter](#), [Derek Jeter RC](#), [Derek Jeter rookie card](#), [eBay](#), [error](#), [Lenox](#), [misprint](#), [parallel](#), [Polar Bear](#), [printer's proof](#), [Professional Sports Authenticator](#), [PSA](#), [PSA 10 Gem Mint](#), [RC](#), [rookie card](#), [Set Registry](#), [T206](#), [the hobby](#), [The Standard Catalog of Baseball Cards](#), [Uzit](#), [variation](#) on [June 9, 2013](#).

2000 Skybox E-X E-Xceptional Red, Green & Blue

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The 2000 Skybox E-X E-Xceptional insert set is one of the most popular insert sets from the insert-crazed era of the late 1990s. Judging by their availability on eBay, or the lack thereof, the E-X E-Xceptional cards are also among the most coveted and hoarded of all inserts, despite the fact that they were not nearly as short-printed as other popular inserts from the period. The set is comprised of 15 cards, including Derek Jeter, Ken Griffey Jr., Cal Ripken Jr., Chipper Jones, and Frank Thomas, among others, and they are available in three different tiers, or parallels, of varying print runs. An example from the base Red set could be pulled one in every 14 packs and was produced to a print run of 1,999 serial-numbered sets, the Green to a print run of 999, and the Blue to just 250, the latter of which could be pulled at a rate of one in every 288 packs. Based on these numbers, some

quick math proves that there exist precisely 29,985 of the Red cards, 14,985 of the Green, and 3,750 of the Blue. And yet, a quick [search on eBay](#) reveals just thirty available examples—yeah, just thirty—which begs the question: where the heck have they all gone?

Produced by Skybox, a brand of Fleer/Skybox International, the E-X E-Xceptional cards are remarkably similar to the mega popular Skybox E-X Jambalaya basketball insert cards of the late 90s, arguably the most popular insert cards ever produced, with Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant examples from 1997 and 1998 generating sales in excess of \$10,000. John at [oldschoolbreaks.wordpress.com](#) writes that the E-X E-Xceptional is his personal favorite insert set, and he notes that the cards “feature the same technology used in the Jambalaya inserts in basketball.” That is to say, the cards are die-cut in an oval shape, and they feature an almost cloth-like front surface that creates a 3-D appearance similar to the old-school Sportflx cards of the 1980s. The cards are exceptionally attractive in person, no pun intended, but their die-cut perimeters and black backs often show excessive chipping on the reverse, creating a challenge for high-grade collectors seeking PSA 10 Gem Mint or BGS 10 Pristine perfection.



The 2000 E-X E-Xceptional baseball insert cards are rare but not impossible, and there are just enough still kicking around to make collecting the set a challenge, in any condition, but especially in top grades. The cards are intensely appealing in person, and they share an [affinity](#) with one of the most popular basketball insert sets ever produced. In short, the E-Xceptional cards are exactly that, exceptional, on every level, Red, Green, and Blue.

* Please note that the Green and Blue PSA 10 examples above are available in the [Small Traditions web store](#), and the Red PSA 10 is currently up for auction in our [Monthly Masterpieces Plus #9](#) auction, ending tomorrow night, Saturday 6/1.

This entry was posted in [Inserts](#), [The Dynasty Years](#) and tagged [BGS 10](#), [BGS 10 Pristine](#), [Cal Ripken Jr.](#), [Chipper Jones](#), [Derek Jeter](#), [E-X E-Xceptional](#), [Fleer](#), [Frank Thomas](#), [Insert](#), [Jambalaya](#), [Ken Griffey Jr.](#), [Kobe Bryant](#), [Michael Jordan](#), [PSA 10](#), [PSA 10 Gem Mint](#), [Skybox](#) on [May 31, 2013](#).

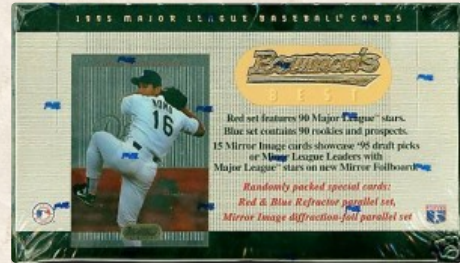
Refractory Refractor: The 1995 Bowman's Best Blue

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The word Refractor comes to us from the noun [refraction](#), a physics term which refers to the change of direction of a ray of light, but when it comes to the 1995 Bowman's Best Blue Refractor, the term comes awfully close to the definition for another similar sounding word, the adjective [refractory](#), which means hard or impossible to manage, obstinate, or stubbornly disobedient. Coincidence? Maybe. To date, however, the 1995 Bowman's Best Blue Refractor #1 Derek Jeter RC Rookie Card does not exist in Gem Mint condition, as neither PSA nor BGS have ever graded a single example above the grade of Mint 9. It is without question one of the most exquisite Derek Jeter cards ever produced, not just from his 350 different rookie cards produced between 1992 and 1996, but from among all of The Captain's cards ever made. It is also his most condition sensitive.

The 1995 Bowman's Best Blue Refractor #1 Derek Jeter is a parallel version of the regular 1995 Bowman's Best Blue issue. It is about 50 times scarcer than the regular version and about 1,000 times more challenging to find in decent condition. The 1995 Bowman's Best issue is a 195-card premium, all-foil (or, some call it chromium) set in its second year of production. Also called chase cards, the refractors were seeded one per every 6 packs of the high-end product. One pack contained seven cards, and one box contained 24 packs, so each wax box contained an average of 4 refractors and 164 regular cards. In other words, it would take about 1.2 wax boxes to yield a standard non-refractor Jeter, and it would take nearly 49 boxes to yield a single Jeter refractor. The problem with finding a decent Jeter refractor, however, isn't that boxes cost anywhere from \$200 to \$300 on [eBay](#). The problem is that most of the refractor cards are notoriously off-centered, either from top-to-bottom, like the card graded PSA 9 (OC) pictured above, or from left-to-right, which collectors can easily determine by counting the vertical lines to the left and to the right of the "Derek Jeter Yankees" text at the card's top.



For several years, in fact, the refractor parallels of the Vladimir Guerrero and Andrew Jones rookie cards from this set were some of the most coveted and expensive cards in the hobby, with raw examples selling for as much as \$500 to \$1,000, depending on their centering, and what few PSA 10s that exist fetching over \$2,000. Even to this day, [PSA has graded](#) just four examples of the Guerrero and five examples of the Jones in PSA 10 Gem Mint condition, from 294 and 244 submissions, respectively, and most collectors of the set agree that less than 500 examples of each were produced. For its part, [Beckett Grading Services](#) has never awarded its Gem Mint grade to either key rookie card, and it has only given the coveted Gem grade to just two cards from the entire set from over 1,300 submissions on record. Now that's tough!



What's even tougher? While even novice collectors can quickly discern the difference between the regular issue and the refractor parallel, there exists a third Jeter version that has eluded even the most advanced of collectors for years. Most price guides are quick to note that card numbers 72 (Carlos Perez) and 84 (Orlando Miller) can be found in the refractor variation both with and without the word "REFRACTOR" printed in the lower left of the reverse, but no price guides make any mention of cards that say "REFRACTOR" on the lower reverse but that do not actually show the refractor finish on front. [A Derek Jeter example](#) of this uncatalogued variation is currently up for auction in Small Traditions [Monthly Masterpieces](#) #7, along with [221 other premium Derek Jeter cards](#) graded by PSA or BGS. We're not sure whether the card is a bona fide error or simply an unfinished printer's proof, and we're also not sure if it's

the only example in existence. We are sure, however, that it's the only example we've ever encountered, and we're almost just as sure that it's the only example you'll ever encounter as well. It was printed almost 20 years ago, and after another 20 years, it may just prove to be the rarest Derek Jeter rookie card in the hobby.

This entry was posted in [Inserts](#), [The RC Years](#) and tagged [1995 Bowman's Best](#), [1995 Bowman's Best Blue refractor](#), [Beckett Grading Services](#), [BGS](#), [BGS 9.5 Gem Mint](#), [chase card](#), [Derek Jeter](#), [Derek Jeter rookie card](#), [error](#), [Jeter](#), [parallel card](#), [PSA](#), [PSA 10 Gem Mint](#), [PSA 9 Mint](#), [RC](#), [Refractor](#), [rookie card](#), [variation](#) on [March 27, 2013](#).

Chasing the Rainbow: The 1996 Select Certified Set

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Love of 'em or hate 'em, parallel insert cards are as unavoidable in today's hobby as are cell phones and computers in our daily lives. Ironically, both of these realities entered the mainstream at about the same time. It was late summer of 1996 when my incoming freshman class at Lehigh University was informed, for the first time ever, that all students would be *required* to maintain email accounts. It was also that summer when Pinnacle Brands issued its groundbreaking 1996 Select Certified set, a 144-card hobby-only issue that contained an

unprecedented six levels of parallel insert (or chase) cards, meaning that every regular card in the set could be found in an additional six different variations (or parallels).

Although Topps and Upper Deck had already been implementing parallels of their own for several years, the 1996 Select Certified set featured the shortest-printed parallels ever produced, with its Mirror Gold parallel boasting a print run of just 30 total copies. Yes, just 30. Visually speaking, they were also one of the most stunning cards the hobby had ever seen, featuring a flashy hologfoil surface that shimmered like actual gold when reflected under light. They were an immediate sensation with collectors, who ripped through the \$4.99 MSRP packs like hotcakes on a cold winter morning, and today they remain among the single most coveted insert cards ever produced. Major stars like Cal Ripken, Jr. and Ken Griffey, Jr. can fetch more than \$1,000 in top grades, and the set's key card, the 1996 AL Rookie of the Year, Derek Jeter, has sold for as much as \$5,000 in raw condition. No copies have ever graded Gem Mint at BGS, and only two of the 30 copies produced have ever graded PSA 10 Gem Mint. If either of those copies ever comes to market, however, many Jeter collectors expect the sale to challenge or to even surpass the extraordinary \$25,000 price tag that recent sales of the 1993 SP Foil Derek Jeter RC has generated in PSA 10 Gem Mint condition.



The other five parallels from the 1996 Select Certified set are no less popular than the mighty Mirror Gold, just slightly more affordable. They include the scarce Mirror Blue and Mirror Red, which were also produced to extremely low print runs: just 45 and 90, respectively. Like the Mirror Gold, they feature a similarly sensational visual appeal, and they also command hefty price tags in top grades. Next is the Certified Blue and Certified Red, which were produced to print runs of just 180 and 1,800, respectively, and last is the Artist's Proof parallel, which appears similar to the regular issue except for the inclusion of an "Artist's Proof" stamp in the lower left corner of the front surface and was produced to a print run of just 500. Like the regular cards, every one of these parallels was issued with a thin protective film, or skin, over their sensitive reflective surfaces. Removing this so-called skin is a delicate and dangerous process, but the skins tend to dull the appearance of the cards, and once removed, the cards shimmer with an undeniable luster, each more brilliant than the last. Together, the various parallels encouraged a new concept in collecting, enticing hobby enthusiasts to "chase the rainbow," that is, to collect a complete run consisting of one example of each parallel for a particular player.

Pinnacle Brands didn't reinvent the wheel when it issued its Select Certified set in 1996. The Topps Company had been issuing its limited edition Tiffany sets since 1984, and a decade later it would change the hobby forever with its massively popular Refractor parallels in its 1993 Finest product. Both Topps and Upper Deck had also been producing various gold and silver foil-accented parallels to their regular issues since the early 1990s, but nothing had yet matched the masterpiece effort of the Select Certified Mirror cards of 1996. The following year would witness the hobby's first ever one-of-one cards, taking the tiered short-print parallel to its ultimate limit with the legendary 1997 Flair Showcase Masterpieces. Today, short-printed parallels are so prevalent that almost every pack contains at least one card bearing some sort of variation from its standard issue, and as a result they no longer carry the eye-popping premiums as the hobby's earliest parallels, which are now fetching thousands of dollars in top grades. New and old collectors alike, including vintage collectors looking to expand their horizons as well as forlorn collectors from the 1980s and 1990s looking to revitalize their passion for cardboard and to resuscitate their collections from the so-called "junk era," need remember only three little words in order to grasp what's currently happening in the hobby: 90s inserts rule!

This entry was posted in [Inserts](#), [The RC Years](#) and tagged [1/1](#), [1993 Finest Refractor](#), [1993 SP Foil Derek Jeter](#), [1996 Select Certified](#), [1997 Flair Showcase Masterpieces](#), [90s insert cards](#), [Artist's Proof](#), [BGS 9.5 Gem Mint](#), [Cal Ripken](#), [Certified Blue](#), [Certified Red](#), [chase card](#), [chase the rainbow](#), [collect](#), [Derek Jeter](#), [inert](#), [insert card](#), [Ken Griffey](#), [Masterpiece](#), [Mirror Blue](#), [Mirror Gold](#), [Mirror Red](#), [modern cards](#), [one-of-one](#), [parallel](#), [parallel card](#), [Pinnacle Brands](#), [PSA 10 Gem Mint](#), [RC Refractor](#), [rookie card](#), [short print](#), [the hobby](#), [Topps](#), [Topps Tiffany](#), [Upper Deck](#) on [March 23, 2013](#).

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