

## **Panini collects NBA renewal**

*Matt Cutler*

The National Basketball Association (NBA) has agreed a multi-year extension to its partnership with the Panini Group in a new deal that is set to have an increased focus on the Chinese market.

The NBA's decision to first partner with Panini in 2009 was seen as a surprise move by the league as it cast aside established American brands in the shape of Topps and Upper Deck. Under the terms of the new agreement, Panini will continue to be the exclusive trading card and sticker partner for the NBA globally, expanding its current development and distribution of trading cards and products worldwide, with a particular focus on China.

The deal came ahead of the start of the NBA's 2012-13 season today and reinforced its commitment to the Chinese market. China is considered to be the NBA's second biggest market after the United States and reportedly generated more than US\$100 million in revenue for the league in the past year. The league this month announced plans to develop a first-of-its-kind facility in Tianjin's Wuqing District. NBA China agreed a partnership with Yatai Lanhai Investment Group that will see the development of a four-storey NBA-themed building covering 12,000 square metres in the middle of New Water Town.

The renewal with Panini reinforces the Italian firm's position as the only company in the world to manufacture official trading cards and stickers for the NBA, National Football League (NFL), NFL Players' Association, National Hockey League (NHL), NHL Players' Association, Major League Baseball Players' Association and FIFA World Cup. Panini's array of NBA products is designed to attract new and existing collectors, and to establish a high-end marketplace for NBA trading cards and related products domestically and internationally. "Our companies share a collective interest in promoting our brands worldwide," said Sal Larocca, executive vice-president of the NBA's global merchandising group. "Panini has continually demonstrated the ability and commitment to creating products that appeal to our fans on a global basis."

Panini America CEO Mark Warsop added: "The popularity of the NBA game globally is unmatched and, with new NBA superstars emerging, it's an exciting time to collect NBA trading cards, which are not only fun but highly sought after in the secondary trading card market. In the last three years, there has not been a more valuable modern-day trading card than our National Treasures NBA product that included a 1-of-1 Blake Griffin NBA Logoman Rookie card that sold on the secondary market for \$38,000. This new long-term agreement with the NBA serves as the foundation to our future growth and our long-term commitment to the trading card category."

**Fonte:** SportBusiness International. Disponível em:  
<<http://www.sportbusiness.com/news/186562/panini-collects-nba-renewal>>.  
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