

CARDS RIGHT

Randomly inserted in packs, these limited release cards became highly valuable and getting your team wasn't enough, you wanted the chase cards. The original gold chase cards from 1994 were Ricky Stuart, Kerrod and Steve Walters and St George Dragons duo Mark Coyne and Brad Mackay.

With the onset of the Super League War and competition from computer consoles like the Sony Playstation, card collecting dropped dramatically. Stores started closing down in quick succession as the card phase had passed.

In 2000, Select, who was already the manufacturer of AFL cards, decided to add Rugby league to its stable. For the next 12 years, they continued the fine tradition. They introduced insert sets like Future Force Rookie Signature cards, with superstars such as Billy Slater and Benji Marshall. You're doing well if you can pick up the Marshall card for less than two hundred dollars.

With the help of online shopping phenomenon, ebay, card collectors are now able to complete their sets a lot easier and a lot cheaper, not having to buy packet after packet, or in one hard-core collectors case, box after box. Intense bidding wars for cards are commonplace. When I went online and searched 'NRL

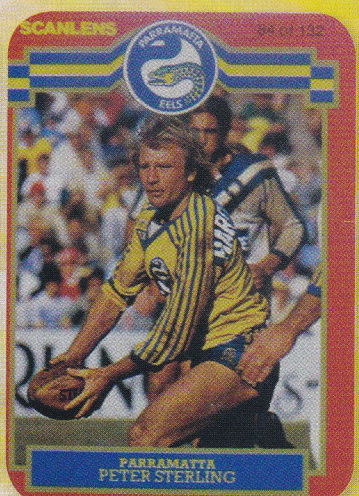
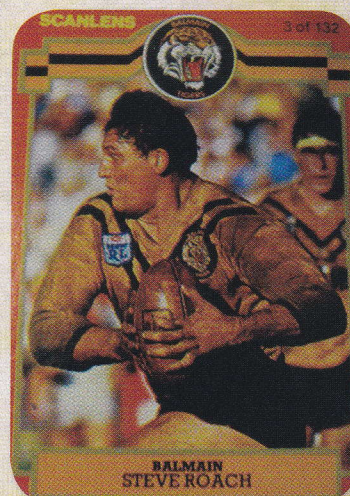
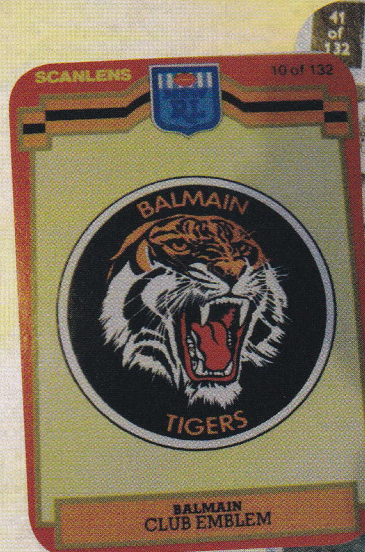
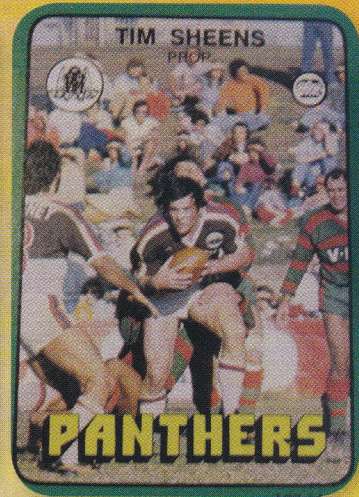
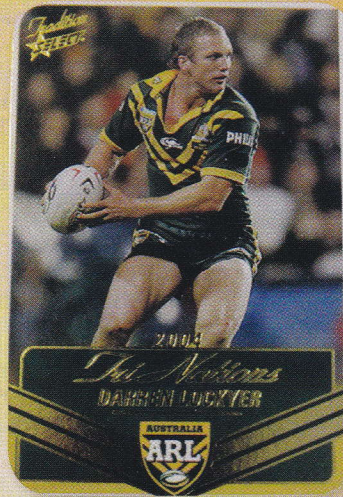
signature card' on ebay, I came across a Blake Austin 2013 ESP Traders Young Guns Signature card that has nineteen bids with two days to go, and was already fetching a hundred and seventy dollars.

As Sales and Marketing manager Terry Wilson from Elite Sports Properties explains, "Taking over the NRL licence allows ESP to re-engineer the card market. When the opportunity came to put in a bid for the license, we jumped at it."

Being the exclusive provider of NRL Trading and Game Cards is as Mr. Wilson puts it "A natural progression for us (ESP)." With the recent card releases: NRL Power Play and NRL Traders, Mr. Wilson hopes card collectors will have something "new and exciting" to enjoy.

One of the ways that ESP has already "re-engineered" the card market is with NRL Power Play Game Cards. Cards have a unique code that fans can register online at www.nrlpowerplay.com.au that way you won't only have a physical card but an online album of your entire collection.

With Elite Sports Properties having signed a long-term deal with the NRL to produce cards, collectors can look forward to ESP continuing the fine tradition for years to come. ★



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