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Physical Sports Cards

Soccer Guide



Handwritten graffiti on the left side of the wall, including the word 'crist' in red and large blue letters that appear to be 'LIVRO'.

The go-to soccer card resource for you.

Whether you're completely new to the hobby or already familiar with sports cards in other sports and you want to understand the minutiae of soccer – this guide is for you!

I like to keep things simple, so rather than putting together a full blown expert eBook or something like that, I decided to only pick what really matters to and list it here.

Have fun!

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Disclaimer: Of course, the entire content of this resource and everything you find on SoccerCards.info is no investment advice of any kind. Everything published or said by me is my personal opinion. I aim to provide information and education for everyone interested in the sports card hobby, but it is important to do your own analysis before making any decision based on your own personal circumstances. Never buy sports cards if you cannot afford it or if other essential expense should be prioritized. Simply see it as a hobby to have fun with and put the investment/profit perspective second.

Brands

There is no exclusive deal with a manufacturer. Most famous soccer card brands are **Panini** and **Topps**. Panini has produced most of the vintage stickers.

Competitions/events

The **FIFA World Cup** is the biggest sports event in the world — 562 million people watched the 2014 World Cup Final in Brazil, 150 million people watched the 2020 Super Bowl. The World Cup is held every four years, it will be in Qatar in 2022 and - very important - in the US, Canada and Mexico in 2026.

Another important competition on national team level is the **UEFA European Championship (EURO)** held with qualified national teams from Europe every four years.

On club level, the **UEFA Champions League** is the most important event. Winning the Champions League final is the highest achievement you can get as a European team. Second most important competition on club level is the **UEFA Europa League**, who's winner gets automatically qualified for next year's Champions League.

During the events and the anticipation of those, prices of cards may go up as a result of increased general interest. On the contrary, it can also be a value decreasing event if for example, a big player does not qualify for a major competition with his country.

Defensive players

Be careful! Usually they don't get much love from the market although they might be world-class (also true for goalkeepers). Reason is that they don't appear on the scoring board as much and therefore draw less attention to their names.

Graded cards

As you might now, card grading is the practice of submitting a trading card to an independent third-party service. They inspect it for authenticity and then rank the condition on a 10 point scale. You should focus on graded cards as a collector since that's the only way you know for sure that you get a really good card. Generally speaking, graded cards are probably the safest investment, even though they might have a lower return. PSA is the grading company with the highest perceived value among soccer card investors.

Offensive players

The most promising players for long-term ROI, especially when you collect promising prospects. Focus on players who are actively involved in their team's goal scoring, either by scoring themselves (like Robert Lewandowski) or providing lots of assists (like Kevin De Bruyne). It also helps a lot if players have a "spectacular" playing style that people enjoy watching (like Jadon Sancho).

Parallels

You do want to focus on parallels and especially numbered parallels for your collection since scarcity is a key concept when it comes to seeing sports cards also from a long-term investment perspective. In general, the serial numbered cards are going to be worth more than base cards. However, there are some exceptions to the rule. In Prizm, Prizm Silvers which are not numbered are really key rookie cards to collect and are often worth more than numbered parallels.

Rookie cards

Super important! There is very little value from an investment standpoint in buying a card from someone that is not his rookie card. There can only be one first card of a certain player, so these will be scarce. Check psacard.com/pop and tcdb.com to find real rookie cards. The first card of a player in a popular set (like Panini Prizm) or competition (like the World Cup) can also be a good catch.

Scarcity

Scarcity is a key concept when it comes to collecting sports cards and seeing it from an investment perspective as well. You want to buy cards that are rare and scarce. The less of a card is available, the more valuable it is going to be if demand increases.

Season changes

The national seasons in Europe change in summer, usually during May/June and are followed by a three months break. During that break, the transfer window is open and players are allowed to change their clubs. The leagues also take a break of a few weeks during Christmas season. The English Premier League, however, does not take a break at that time. Instead, they have a couple of games in a short and intensive period of time, with special focus on the 'Boxing Day' on Dec. 26th.

Series

Figuring out the best series of brands can get a bit complex since there are many series exclusive for soccer. Still, a popular modern series of Panini for example is Prizm which can be found in basketball, too. Topps has the popular Chrome series which is famous in Baseball as well. Other series that became popular include Panini Mega Cracks, which features Lionel Messi's 2004 rookie card. Due to the paper material of this series, those cards are pretty hard to grade. Don't get too confused over series in soccer. In general, it is more important to focus on the player and whether you can get the rookie card of that player than to focus on a specific series of brands.

Stickers

Really crucial in soccer and a big part of the collecting culture in Europe. You will find that the rookie card of many players is actually a sticker and not a card. Stickers are harder to grade than modern cards as well and therefore can be really valuable if graded high.

Transfer rules

If a player wants to leave a club to another, the receiving club usually has to pay a fee that is oriented to the market value of the player and has to be negotiated between the two clubs. You can check market values on [Transfermarkt.com](https://www.transfermarkt.com), who update them regularly. Sometimes, players have release clauses in their contracts which means that they can leave the club when another is willing to pay a pre-determined fee. In that case, no negotiations between the clubs have to be made. A player can also join another club on loan, usually for one to two seasons. Sometimes, the clubs negotiate a buying option on top of the loan deal so the receiving club has the option to permanently sign the player on loan. In rare occasions, you also see clubs swapping players with each other (a famous example is the transfer from Zlatan Ibrahimovic to FC Barcelona, who made a deal with Inter Milan to swap Samuel Eto'o plus a fee of €69.5m to sign Ibrahimovic).

A player's contract usually ends on the 30th of June of a given year (since the season is over that time) and if the contract has not been extended beforehand, the player is considered a free agent from that date on. A free agent can join any club without the receiving club having to pay a fee.

Transfers can only be made when the transfer window is open in summer (usually about three months) and winter (usually about one month).

US players

The US has made some serious development in last years and is consistently bringing up new prospects. Players and talents to look out for include Christian Pulisic, Giovanni Reyna, Sergiño Dest, Weston McKennie, Tyler Adams, Yunus Musah, Timothy Weah and Brenden Aaronson.

Vintage

Vintage is huge in soccer. Soccer has seen prominent legends from nations all over the world. Big names include Diego Maradona (Argentina), Pelé (Brazil), Zinedine Zidane (France) or Franz Beckenbauer (Germany).



Want to learn more?

Our website is the perfect place to learn more about sports cards, especially when it comes to finding out important things like what the real rookie card of a specific player is.

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