

A Guide to Nomar Garciaparra Rookie Cards

Have you ever wanted to know the value of your favorite Nomar Garciaparra rookie card? Unlike many of his peers in the "junk wax" era of 1987 to 1993, Nomar has but one True Rookie Card. That is the 1992 Topps Traded Team USA card. However, there are several cards you may consider to be Nomar rookie cards.

In this card collector's guide, we will also look at a few of the most valuable Nomar Garciaparra baseball cards that could be considered worth collecting to celebrate his early career. These include one of the more important early Garciaparra cards, which is from the 1992-1993 Stadium Club Jack Murphy box set. We'll also look at other Nomar Garciaparra baseball cards from before his major league debut and several key releases (notably Upper Deck) from Nomar's actual rookie year - 1995 - in Major League Baseball.

Before we get into it, I'd like to make an honorable mention the 1997 Bowman's Best Mirror Image #MI1. While not a Nomar Garciaparra rookie card, the somewhat valuable Mirror Image card features not only Nomar, but future Hall of Fame shortstop Derek Jeter. On the reverse, Hall of Fame shortstop Barry Larkin is featured with Hiram Bocachica.

Obviously, the reason this is a cool card because it features two Hall of Fame shortstops (Jeter is a no-doubt Hall selection for 2020). There's also a refractor version, which is significantly more valuable. It's worth mentioning, just for the fact it puts Nomar in some great company. We won't talk about Bocachica... Hiram aside, this card has a lot of investment value because of Larkin and Jeter, not so much because of Nomar, although he only helps the card's value.

Of course, because Nomar was such a star for the Boston Red Sox up to his trade in 2004, he spawned many cards to collect. But for our purposes in this guide, we'll only be looking at those which predate or coincide with Nomar's true rookie year.

In this collector's guide, we will highlight with significant populations graded by the industry standard PSA and Beckett Grading Services (BGS). These are the cards considered to be "investment-grade." We will also advise which cards can fetch the best return if you were to acquire raw copies for the main purpose of sending them off to be slabbed. (That sounds very painful, but that's the terminology.)

However, due to the ever changing nature of graded card populations, I ask that you check the PSA and Beckett Grading Services websites for the current populations. Also, keep in mind that graded populations are only a baseline for how many have been graded, not how many are actually in circulation.

Without further ado, let's start with Nomar's most important card in the baseball card hobby.

1992 Topps Traded #39T

While Topps Traded was a factory set and it's fairly common to still find in sealed condition, Nomar Garciaparra benefits by having the key rookie card in the set. His long-time teammate Jason Varitek, the Red Sox career catcher, also has his true rookie card in the set. This is Nomar's only official rookie card, as well.

While there are other "rookie cards" that collectors may have an interest in grabbing from this set, this is the key card that collectors most covet. If you are a serious sports card investor with a Red Sox inclination, this is the only card you should probably concern yourself with. Not only are there a lot of Team USA collectors, but there are plenty of Red Sox fans that want this card, too. It still changes hands in the hobby fairly often.

Being the only true rookie card for such a popular player on a big market team, the Topps Traded Nomar card was long thought to be an investment grade card. PSA has graded over 7500 examples and BGS has received around 3000 examples. Of course, after he left the Red Sox, Nomar only had a couple more above average seasons before injuries pretty much sapped whatever talent he had left in his mid-thirties. Those who slabbed examples of this card hoping to cash in on a Hall of Fame career were very disappointed.

The good news for this card is that as many collectors have entered or reentered the baseball card hobby, they often target their favorite players of their youth. Nomar is one of those fondly remembered players for many, and since this is the only card listed as his true rookie card, there's a lot of instant demand built into it. Because only about 12 percent of this One True Rookie have been graded as True Gems, the focus for the most serious investors will be to collect only the Best of the Best.

In fact, the only competition for the Topps Traded Nomar rookie card is the Gold parallel of the same card.

1992 Topps Traded Gold #39T

Nomar's "Golden Goose" rookie card parallel may be one of the more undervalued on the hobby. Topps Traded Gold was a separate factory set and it's rumored that only 6000 were produced of the 1992 edition. While that's far from a small number by today's standards, it's a small number from the era.

Out of those 6000 sets, BGS received around 500 Nomar cards for grading. PSA received over 1600. So, over one third of the stated print run was graded by these card authentication giants.

Without a doubt some have made their way to other professional graders such as SGC, GMA, and others. There are still raw copies out there, though, including sealed sets with a potential PSA 9 or PSA 10 sitting within.

Obviously, the Topps Traded Gold is the most important Nomar Garciaparra rookie card. But, because he's not a Hall of Fame player, there's a surprising discount built into the price. This market inefficiency may one day be realized and corrected, of course. So, if you were to collect just one Nomar Garciaparra card, this would be the one. After all, who doesn't want the Best of the Best of the One True Rookie Card of Number Five?

1993 Stadium Club Murphy Nomar Garciaparra #93

Garciaparra's New York Yankees counterpart Derek Jeter has a far more famous (and valuable) rookie card in the 1993 Stadium Club Murphy set. In fact, this humble author declares this set to have the best Jeter Rookie card. But, the Nomar card is also a key card in the set, with nearly 200 graded Gem Mint PSA copies on the market. It doesn't have nearly the market interest of the One True Rookie Card from 1993 Topps Traded, however. It isn't considered a true rookie card in the industry. But it is the first "investment-grade" Nomar Garciaparra card after the 1992 Topps Traded set, even if it's not a "true rookie."

All that said, we can tell you a couple reasons why the humble author of this report prefers the 1994 Stadium Club issue of Nomar to this one. First off, the card depicts Nomar with Team USA rather than the Red Sox - although team USA cards tend to still be popular in the sports card hobby. Also, the blue, red, and white jersey is similar to a uniform that the Red Sox have worn before. But, it's still not a Sox uniform.

The main knock against this card for this author is Nomar's expression. It looks like he's ready to get in the batter's box, and he is really annoyed that the photographer picked that moment for a photo. He just doesn't look pleasant at all here. This sour expression is certainly not how I think of Nomar, at least not at this early point in his career; wait until 2004...

You would think photography would have something to do with a card's value. But, in many cases, it doesn't. In this case, one may rather own the far less valuable 1994 Stadium Club card for its superior aesthetics. Nomar just doesn't look happy here.

Still, this is actually the third most valuable early Nomar card. A lot of that is based on scarcity. The PSA 10 doesn't sell often on eBay, but when it has, it seems the floor is still worth the cost of grading with a small profit margin. The other two are the "One True Rookie Card" and its "Golden Goose" parallel from 1992 Topps Traded.

Other Early Nomar Garciaparra Cards (Not True Rookies)

After this point, there are only a few early Nomar cards with much “investment-grade” potential. But, for pure player collectors like myself, it feels necessary to review as many of Nomar’s “rookie related” cards as possible. Many have been overlooked or under-appreciated due to the massive focus on the Topps Traded card. After all, that’s what this *essential collector’s* guide is for! But, if you’re buying Nomar cards as an investment, there won’t be many coming up that will serve that purpose, outside of pure enjoyment.

1994 Classic Update Cream of the Crop Update #CC11

While Classic released some of the less aesthetically pleasing minor league cards in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, this 1994 Classic Update set actually looks pretty good. Nomar is included in the 20-card Cream of the Crop subset, picturing him with the Sarasota Red Sox. It’s a good looking card, picturing Nomar in the middle of a throw to first from shortstop.

The back of the card actually has a nice little bio, too, talking about how Nomar was the first of four Georgia Tech players taken in the 1994 draft. He was considered the nation’s finest defensive player - skills which he put on display in the major leagues, of course. Also, his batting average never fell below .413 all season in his last year of college. Talk about a hit tool!

This Cream of the Crop set isn’t exactly full of stars. The most notable player from this Update set is future Chicago White Sox All-Star slugger Paul Konerko. Two future Red Sox teammates of Nomar are in the set though: Dustin Hermanson and Todd Walker. Other notable players in the set who had significant MLB careers include pitchers C.J. Nitkowski, Jaret Wright, and Paul Wilson, outfielders Ben Grieve and Terrence Long, and catcher Ramon Castro.

1994 Classic Four Sport Nomar Garciaparra #173

As one of the most highly regarded college players at the time, Nomar has SIX DIFFERENT cards in the 1994 Classic Four Sport set, not counting parallels but including subsets and an autograph. The autograph is fairly rare, limited to just 1020 copies! Perhaps the only knock on this card is that it’s horizontal, which makes for better photography perhaps, but many collectors prefer vertical.

The #173 base card is a nice simple card from Nomar’s Georgia Tech days. That powerful swing and aggressive follow-through looks pretty familiar to Red Sox fans. But being a college card, despite a full-bleed design with unobtrusive Classic 4 logo in the upper-right hand corner.

There are several parallels of this card. One is the Gold version, which features bigger and easier to read lettering. There's the Press Proof version limited to 1000 copies, which is stamped with red foil.

There is also the Collector's Club #C15 which is almost the same card as #173, but has a Classic Collector's Club logo in the upper-left-hand corner. The back also tells you that it's limited to 10000 copies sent to 1995 collector's club members only. It's technically a different card and not a true parallel, despite being very similar, making it one of the six different cards mentioned before.

1994 Classic Four Sport - Bonus Cards #BC16

Taking position at his familiar shortstop spot, this 1994 Classic Four Sport subset is a good looking foil college-era card of Nomar Garciaparra. The back is particularly interesting thanks to the writeup, which mentions the comparisons scouts were making between Nomar and Barry Larkin. It also asserts that Boston saw Nomar as a pick towards finally bringing home a championship. Ironically, that came without him in 2004 - though he did end up with a ring and half of a World Series share of cash bonus.

Aesthetically, this is a great card, with the Yellow Jackets wearing their alternate black jersey. While Nomar himself is in color, this uniform is perfect for this dark monochrome card design, with the gold GT on his cap and the dirt on his pant leg the only true color. It's a great design.

Nomar is in excellent company with this Bonus Cards (BC) subset. It includes future NFL Hall of Fame running back Marshall Faulk, and future NBA Hall of Famers Jason Kidd and Grant Hill.

1994 Classic Four Sport - Classic Picks #19

Limited to 24,900 copies - albeit not really that low of a number - the Nomar Garciaparra Classic Picks card features Nomar fielding yet another ball at shortstop. It actually features the same text on the back as the 1994 Classic Update Cream of the Crop card, which mentions being the most highly regarded college defensive player.

The card doesn't scan well, but it's not a bad design. The back features Nomar standing in the dugout, both in the background and in a frame off to the right. Despite not being a particularly

scarce card, they're rare enough that they are worth a few bucks. Also, they are condition sensitive, so near-mint or better copies can hold a price premium.

1994 Classic Four Sport High Voltage #HV20

Not only is this a cool looking card of Nomar swinging the bat on top of a lightning background, it's actually quite rare. There were only 2,995 of these ever printed, and unlike many early limited print run cards, it's actually serial numbered. It has a pretty nice writeup on the back, too.

Like with the Bonus Cards subset, the High Voltage set also features cards of Marshall Faulk from football and Jason Kidd & Grant Hill in basketball. Those cards obviously have a bit more value considering their Hall of Fame connections, but the Nomar card is very sought after due to its relatively extreme value.

1994 Signature Rookies Draft Picks #12

Not one of the better known Nomar Garciaparra college-era cards, the Signature Rookies set features inked signatures (obviously) which is the main draw of this product. The only design issue I have with this Signature Rookies Draft Picks card is the weird effect on the Signature Rookies logo. It would've been perfectly fine without that weird doubling effect, which is a distracting design feature. The base cards were limited to a print run of 45,000 - not crazy low, but low compared to the Junk Wax era immediately preceding 1994 releases.

Of course, the card you really want from this set is the autographed parallel, serial numbered to 7,750 copies. These poor guys had to sign a lot more of these cards back then! My preference would be the Classic Four Sport auto from 1994, although they aren't all that much different design-wise - that other one being horizontal - and the signatures on these look good.

1994-95 Fleer Excel #10

Fleer Excel isn't a baseball card brand you hear much about anymore. In fact, you hardly ever hear about it in the collecting hobby. However, there is one notable "rookie card" featured in the 1994 Fleer Excel set of a player by the name of Nomar Garciaparra. The design of his card in the set has a nice retro feel to it featuring a gray background with a blue and red color scheme for the Sarasota Red Sox.

Like many of Nomar's early cards, it's a card that features him fielding his position at shortstop. In this case, he's in motion trying to cut off a ball in the hole. This is a move Nomar is quite famous for doing quite well. It's refreshing to see this action shot, and not just a basic shot of Nomar standing at his position or in the act of throwing.

What's interesting about this set is that the back of the card features a bit of an unusual stat line. Instead of batting average, it uses the abbreviation "Pct" which is somewhat odd. Nevertheless, you can see from the numbers that Nomar was holding his own in A ball and was ready for bigger and better things. It's pretty far down the list of minor league issues, but it's a cool little Nomar card that you shouldn't overlook if you're a serious collector of the one-time superstar shortstop.

1994 Stadium Club Draft Picks #69

It's a shame that this 1994 Stadium Club Draft Picks Nomar Garciaparra baseball card isn't very valuable, especially when it features a great portrait of Nomar smiling in a Red Sox uniform! Usually, an early card of a star player wearing a Major League uniform, especially the one he's most associated with, would be a lot more valuable. Had Nomar gone on to the Hall of Fame career people had expected, this card likely would be valuable. Besides the "One True Rookie Card" for Nomar, which is 1992 Topps Traded, the humble author of this rookie card profile prefers this early Nomar card over all others.

With this card, graded Gem Mint 10 examples are hard to come by. With modern cards, this can be problematic as PSA 9 is only going to be a desirable grade in most cases for Hall of Famers. Also, there was an earlier Stadium Club card than this one, meaning this isn't a key card for many collectibles. The earlier Stadium Club card is also more scarce. While the 1994 issue is the nicer looking card, this card doesn't have any real market for it. Unfortunately, the secondary market for this card is so poor that it's not even worth the cost of grading to be slabbed. (Ouch!)

Of course, it's also not considered an actual rookie card, which means it's pretty far down the pecking order for collector's needs. In fact, rookie card collectors often overlook this Stadium Club Draft Picks card entirely. But, considering the hype Nomar had early on in his career - with results to back it up - even secondary cards like this had lots of early investor interest. If you're looking for a more scarce version, there is the First Day Issue, a stamped issue carrying a premium because of its rarity.

1995 Best Top 100 Nomar Garciaparra #3

The 1995 Best baseball card set is best known (no pun intended) for an early rookie card of Hall of Fame slugger Vladimir Guerrero. But, there is a Nomar Garciaparra card in the set, too. While

not considered an official rookie card, it is a popular card among Nomar card collectors. It is far from being the "Best" (pun very intended), but it's a solid minor league issue nonetheless.

The card features a young Garciaparra playing for the Trenton Thunder, then affiliated with the Red Sox. It depicts the shortstop in the middle of a throw to first base. It's a decent action shot and not a bad card at all. Best may not be considered a top brand, but for affordable early cards of future All Stars, the Best sets are worth checking out.

This card would be borderline investment-grade if it had more of an active sales history. So, it's not a top Nomar Garciaparra rookie card. Also, while some cards from the Best sets have sold well, this isn't one of them. Nonetheless, if you're a serious Red Sox or Nomar Garciaparra collector, you may want this card in your collection.

1995 Bowman Foil Prime Prospect #249

Another valuable early Nomar Garciaparra card is the 1995 Bowman Foil Prime Prospect issue. Notably, there are only FIVE PSA 10 examples in existence due to the fact that the Bowman Foil cards are so condition-sensitive. There are fewer than 200 PSA 9 "Mint" examples out there and they typically have traded for less than \$20 on eBay. It's not quite a refractor, but if you can find a near-mint or mint copy, it's a really nice addition to any Nomar Garciaparra card collection.

For what it's worth, there's a fairly nice Derek Jeter rookie card in the same set which sells for as much as \$35 in PSA 9. Imagine what the Nomar card would be worth had Nomar played three or four more years.

1995 Classic 5 Sport Travis Best / Nomar Garciaparra #183

Nomar has two cards in the 1995 Classic 5 Sport set. The #183 card Nomar shares with fellow Georgia Tech standout Travis Best. Of course, Nomar became the better player in the pros. Best was never a star, but he had a 10-year NBA career mostly with the Indiana Pacers.

Despite the mixing of sports, this #183 card is often mentioned as a "rookie" card for Nomar. Considering he has another solo card in the set, it's always been a bit of a head-scratcher for me for this to be considered over the other pure baseball card.

There are several parallels of this card: the Red Die Cuts, Silver Die Cuts, and Printer's Proofs - limited to 795 copies. It's a good card, and Best having had a significant NBA career certainly gives it a little boost, too. But, considering the other card in the set had an autograph parallel, too, makes it a bit odd that this is the more popular of the two cards.

1995 Upper Deck Electric Diamond Top Prospect #10

If you're looking for Nomar Garciaparra's best Upper Deck "rookie card," the Top Prospect card from 1995 Upper Deck is as close as you'll get. Of course, it's not an official rookie card, since many came before it. Still, the 1995 Upper Deck Electric Diamond #10 is a great card for any Nomar card collector. There are only 59 examples graded PSA 10. It's not really a rookie card, but for Upper Deck fans, it's about the best you will get. There's also an Upper Deck Minors Garciaparra card.

How Popular is Nomar Garciaparra in the Baseball Card Hobby?

As one of the best Red Sox players for the better part of a decade, it's no surprise that many Red Sox baseball card collectors covet his cardboard treasures. Number 5 looked like a surefire Hall of Famer after breaking out in his true rookie year of 1997. Of course, just seven years later he would be dealt in one of the most heartbreaking trades in Red Sox history. His career would have a couple more highlights, first with the Cubs and another good year with the Dodgers, before injuries finally forced Nomar to call it a career.

Of course, Number 5 is alive in the hobby. People search daily for the best deals on Nomar Garciaparra cards. In November 2023, Google had almost 600 average monthly searches for "nomar garciaparra rookie card" and nearly 400 monthly searches for "Nomar Garciaparra baseball card". Garciaparra has appeared on baseball cards every year since 1992 through 2023. According to the Trading Card Database, [there are 8,682 unique Nomar Garciaparra cards](#) as of December 2023, including parallels and oddballs.

If he's not worthy of a Baseball Hall of Fame plaque in Cooperstown, New York, then why is he so massively popular in the baseball card hobby? Nomar's short, but exceptional, peak is magnified in his per game stats. His 162 game averages look like those of a Hall of Fame shortstop, perhaps assisted by all of the games he missed due to injury in 2000 and later on in his career.

That being said, how does Nomar stack up to his contemporaries? Baseball Reference has some very interesting Similarity Scores for Nomar, his most comparable being David Wright. It's an appropriate comp, considering the third baseman Wright was an absolute monster for the New York Mets before injuries torpedoed his career, too. Both Nomar's and Wright's high per 162-game marks just back up what an exceptional career he was having. Wright's presence on baseball cards into the 2020's proves the point of his own continued interest within the card collecting hobby.

Nomar Garciaparra VS Derek Jeter in the Baseball Card Hobby

Yankees Hall of Fame shortstop Derek Jeter is one of the biggest names in the entire baseball card hobby. As his career and Nomar's began around the same time, many baseball fans considered him and Nomar to be "mirror images."

On a per game basis, Nomar actually rates a bit better than Jeter in terms of the "hobby stats" in home runs, runs batted in, runs scored, hits, and stolen bases. But, Jeter played in 2747 games, while Nomar played in just 1434 games. So, Jeter obviously scores twice as well in the long run in stat accumulation. If you include postseason numbers, those numbers actually improve somewhat in Jeter's favor. But, even if we factor in postseason numbers, not much changes on a per game basis, actually.

What does all this mean for Nomar and Jeter's standing in the baseball card hobby? If Nomar played almost as long as Derek Jeter, he likely would have entered the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2020. So, the baseball card hobby love for Nomar is completely deserved. Like so many great athletes before him, his body let him down in his prime.

Of course, because his career ended fairly early, finishing up his playing days out of the spotlight in Oakland, Nomar's baseball cards lost their luster. Meanwhile, even with a poor final season, Jeter played his entire career in the Bronx. Also, everyone knew he was destined for the Hall of Fame. So, his card sales have never lost positive momentum. Who do you think was the better shortstop in their prime: Nomar Garciaparra or Derek Jeter?

I hope you enjoyed and learned something from this collector's guide. Let me know what players you'd like me to cover in a future rookie card guide!

Happy collecting!

Disclaimer: This guide is not intended to provide professional investment advice. It contains the opinions of a well-read author knowledgeable on the sports card industry and sports card investor subgroup. Always do your own research before committing to purchasing any sports card, especially those mentioned within this guide.

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Meta description: Discover the value of Nomar Garciaparra's rookie cards in this guide. Learn about his 1992 Topps Traded rookie card, other early baseball cards, and his standing in the baseball card hobby.