

Doug Goddard has left

his job as vice-president of product development at Donruss Playoff. The 33-year-old worked his last day with the card company Friday. "I just decided it was time to take some time off, re-charge my creative juices and look at different opportunities," Goddard said. "This is a fabulous company, with fabulous employees, and I've loved working with each of them." Goddard had been with Playoff since 1998. Prior to that he had been with Donruss when the company was owned by Pinnacle Brands. He said he did not have definitive plans for his future. "Trading cards are my passion, but my wife and I are open to looking at a variety of opportunities where it be within the industry or someplace else," Goddard said.



Trade Fax is published each
Monday and Thursday
©2001 by Krause Publications

Publisher: Dean Listle
Reporters: Rocky Landsverk
and Scott Kelnofer

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Licensors continue to examine authentication market

How seriously are the various sports leagues and players associations looking into the autograph authentication market? Serious enough that representatives from all of the licensing agencies turned out in New York recently for a meeting organized by Canadian-based CrossOff, Inc., to discuss the possibilities of unified authentication and item registration services. Mike Hayes, VP of marketing for CrossOff, said the meeting was designed more as a starting point for discussions on industry unification than a sales pitch for any specific CrossOff services. The company specialized in authenticity verification, registration and database management. "We know there had been discussion at the last Hawaii conference about industry-wide standards for memorabilia, and this was a chance to follow up on those ideas," Hayes said. "Obviously, they're all doing their own thing and they're all in different phases of getting something together. I think there was a general feeling that authentication is an industry issue, not a league issue."

For the most part, the licensors on hand welcomed the chance to meet with each other to discuss where the authentication process is headed, both from an individual organization standpoint and the group as a whole. "The meeting last week was both insightful and informative. It was very positive to see representatives from all the leagues come together to address this subject," said Lisa Goldberg, NBA director of trading cards and collectibles.

"It was great to have all of the different entities in the room to talk about something where there's no standardization," said Brian Fitzgerald, director of commerce and development for NHL.com, adding his league has been approached by several different authentication and registration services in recent months. "We need to about the process and talk about standards. Everyone is using Major League Baseball as the benchmark right now. From here, it's important to find the different hot spots among each of the leagues and find out what their individual concerns are."

Joseph Grippo, licensing manager for collectibles and memorabilia for Major League Baseball, said one of the roadblocks to a unified data registry system is the willingness of the different league licensees to share their customer lists. MLB.com already houses a list of items authenticated through its Arthur Anderson program, although the individual program licensees maintain their own databases, including demographics. "I think that was one of the things that needs to be addresses," Grippo said. "Frankly, our licensees don't want to share their database with anybody."

Hayes said he hoped to organize another group meeting within the next few weeks to discuss more specific issues. "There needs to be some kind of leadership in the industry to say this is the right way to go and establish a road map for how to get there," Hayes said.

News in brief

The New York Daily News reported Friday that federal prosecutors have begun a grand jury investigation of Morris Engelberg, longtime attorney for Joe DiMaggio, and two New Jersey memorabilia dealers into possible wire fraud involving sales of Joe DiMaggio memorabilia. The paper reported the investigation centers on allegations of a secret deal in which Engelberg conspired to sell up to \$400,000 in DiMaggio-signed baseballs without DiMaggio's knowledge. Allegations of fraud first appeared last year in the book, *Joe DiMaggio: The Hero's Life*, written by Richard Ben Cramer. In the book, Cramer alleges Engelberg and Scott DiStefano, a New Jersey memorabilia salesman, struck a deal to profit from the sale of special lost of 2,000 baseballs commemorating Joe DiMaggio Day at Yankee Stadium in 1998. The two allegedly planned to have DiMaggio sign the baseballs, then sell them on the memorabilia market and keep the money. Engelberg denies any wrongdoing, saying DiMaggio had authorized him in writing to purchase the 2,000 baseballs.