

When Celebration Bubbles Over

The Bruins and Mavericks Both Slurp Down Decadent, Colossal Bottles of Champagne

By JASON GAY



Apparently, it tastes like victory, with a sweet whisper of Vancouver's pre-Game 7 presumptuousness—and the faintest hint of LeBron James's tears.

Do you like drinking? Do you like championships? You do? Well, the next time you order booze to commemorate a title—whether it's a Cleveland Indians 2011 World Series (a complete lock, BTW) or your victory in the "Drank Too Much at the Office Christmas Party" competition—we have just the bottle for you cooling in the fridge.

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Bryan Spinelli

Members of the Boston Bruins drinking their 'Ace of Spades' at Foxwoods in Connecticut over the weekend.

It's a little pricey. But in these gourmet farm-raised hot-dog days, what isn't?

And don't give us any nonsense about The New Austerity, because this is now mandatory championship-afterparty behavior. In the past couple of weeks, your NHL Stanley Cup winning Boston Bruins and your NBA kingpin Dallas Mavericks both celebrated their titles at nightclubs by slurping from decadent bottles of champagne. Like white-tigers-eating-caviar-out-of-Fabergé-eggs decadent. According to reports, the Mavericks drank from a 15-liter bottle that cost \$90,000. The Bruins sipped a 30-liter bottle that cost \$100,000. (The Boston Bruins: your cost-conscious bulk-buying luxury-champagne shoppers!)

Both bottles were made by a company called Armand de Brignac. The French brand has been featured in gossip items and music videos before—New Jersey Net stakeholder Jay-Z is an Armand de Brignac connoisseur. Nicknamed the "Ace of Spades" because of its label, the bubbly is known for its hand-made, metallic-finish bottles.



The Bruins shared an Ace of Spades big gulp—known as a "Midas"—that's the equivalent of 40 regular-earthling-sized bottles. The thing is crazy. Only six of them have been made. It weighs roughly 100 pounds and looks like C3PO after 18 months at Gold's Gym. It's the only bottle of champagne that can stand eye to eye with the actual Stanley Cup, which it did Saturday at the Shrine nightclub at the Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut.

The Bruins have gotten a lot of attention for their Last-Night-On-Earth-style bar tab at Shrine, which totaled \$156,000 and included 136 Bud Lights, 35 Jäger bombs, 67 bottled waters and one very lonely \$6 Corona.

But the Bruins didn't actually buy their Ace of Spades. Shrine's owners did. The club is tight with the Bruins, and when partners learned the team was coming to celebrate after its Boston parade, they decided to spring for a gift, said Randy Greenstein, one of the owners. A warm case of PBR would not suffice.

Then a discovery: a real-live Armand de Brignac Midas in a New Jersey warehouse. Greenstein admitted he was amused at the idea of outdoing the bottle consumed nearly a week earlier by the Mavericks and their billionaire owner, Mark Cuban, after vanquishing the Miami Heat.

Associated Press

The Armand de Brignac Midas stands next to a regular champagne bottle.

Plus, this was New England history! "How often do the Bruins win the Stanley Cup?" Greenstein said.

Screeeeeeech! A truck hit the road, back and forth from Jersey, in time for the party.

But when the big moment arrived: trouble. Bruins captain Zdeno Chara—at 6 feet 9 inches, he's the tallest player in NHL history, or a coffee table for Dirk Nowitzki—couldn't uncork the mega-Midas. A struggle ensued. Finally, a wine opener did the trick.

Some of the Bruins took swigs straight from the \$100,000 bottle—Backwash of the Gods. More Midas was poured into the Stanley Cup, with players taking sips. (Interesting fact: The Stanley Cup has a curfew. The Bruins partied on, but at midnight, NHL attendants took the Cup upstairs to its room, where it ordered a club sandwich and watched "Hall Pass" on pay-per-view.)

"Best party I've been to in my life," said Greenstein.

Is the stuff worth it? That bottle cost more than what the Bruins paid for the first couple seasons of Bobby Orr. For \$100,000, you could install a rink in your backyard, buy a Zamboni and sign Jaromir Jagr.

But you try and stop the irrational exuberance after a momentous win. As the saying goes, if you need to ask the price...you probably play for the New York Mets.

Naturally, the Armand de Brignac people are thrilled by the attention.

"This is fantastic," the company's commercial director, Philippe Bienvenu, said from Bordeaux on Wednesday. "We're all huge fans of sport, and seeing those teams celebrate with the brand is a great pride."

But what about the most important thing—how does it, you know, taste? You assume Philippe loves the stuff. I emailed Mark Cuban to ask how he enjoyed his victorious gulp of Ace.

"Best tasting champagne I have ever had," Cuban wrote back.

That's the thing about being a champion—everything is delicious, for a long time.