

MAY 2009 "COLLECTING WITH JEFF"

by **JEFF FIGLER**

Jeff will be starting a second show on Fox radio in St. Louis titled "Jeff Figler's This Week in Sports History". It will air on Saturdays at 5:00pm CST.

Jeff thought that this article on "The History of Baseball Cards" is of interest. The second part of the article will appear next month.

BASEBALL CARD HISTORY

As baseball cards have become a part of American tradition and folklore, it is interesting to see how its evolution developed. A thumbnail sketch is as follows.

It is hard to imagine that baseball cards were first issued in 1887 by a few of the existing tobacco companies of that era. A New York company, Goodwin & Company issued the N172 series in Old Judge and Gypsy Queen cigarette packs. More than 500 players are pictured, and as some players were pictured in several poses, nearly 3500 different variations are known to exist. This set was issued between 1887-1890, as were other sets issued by other tobacco companies, notably Allen & Ginter. Cards issued in that time period were usually quite small, sometimes as small as 1.5" x 2.75".

It should also be noted that one company, Green and Blackwell (G & B) of New York, included chewing gum with their baseball cards, the first time that idea had been implemented.

Not much happened on the baseball card front until the years 1909-1915. During that period baseball cards became very popular, and were issued by such diverse companies as tobacco, candy, and bread manufacturers, as well as sports magazines.

During this time the American Tobacco Company issued the famous T206 set from 1909-1911. Of course, the Honus Wagner card, the jewel of baseball card collectors is included in this set. Again, some players, such as Ty Cobb, are depicted on several cards with different poses. Other tobacco companies, such as Ramly, Hassan and Mecca, also issued cards, as did candy manufacturers such as American Caramel, Cracker Jack, and Zeenut candy.

In most cases, the cards would be included with the product, but not always. One exception was the set of cards issued by Sporting Life magazine, which could only be ordered by mail.

During the 1930's there were many card sets, primarily through gum companies. The Goudey Gum Company issued cards from 1933-1941, and the Bowman Gum Company

issued the Play Ball sets in the late 1930's and into the early 1940's. During that time frame, and even as late as the 1960's, Exhibit cards were prominent, which were very distinctive in that they were thick and black-and-white.

The 1932 U.S. Carmel company issued a set, which, if a person sent to the company the entire set, the person received a free baseball or glove. It was not until the 1980's that card number 16 (Lindy Lindstrom) was discovered, and supposedly only two such sets are known to exist today.

Leaf, another gum company, issued a card set in 1948, and Topps produced its first sets in 1951.

Topps has been producing cards ever since. During the 1950's the two major issuers of cards were Topps and Bowman. However, other companies such as Red Man Chewing Tobacco, Mother's Cookies, Wheaties Cereal, Wilson Weiners, Esskay Meats, and Red Heart Dog Food, among many others, all issued cards. In 1955 the Topps Company bought out Bowman, and through 1980 dominated the card market. Other companies such as Post Cereal, Jello, Hostess, Kahn's Weiners, Milk Duds, and Hire's Root Beer issued cards, but did not match Topps. Finally, the Fleer Corporation slowly began to make a dent in the Topps domination. More on that next time.

EMAILS:

QUESTION #1: I saw your article on Tiger Woods collectables in HOFN.Com. I have a signed baseball cap that he wore in a tournament at West Englebrook on 1/19/01. What is the value?

ANSWER: It is worth approximately \$5,000-7,000.

QUESTION #2: I just bought a 2007 Buick Invitational golf flag signed by Tiger Woods at a silent auction. How much do you think it is worth? How much do you think it will go up in value?

ANSWER: It is worth approximately \$1500-2000. It will continue to go up in value if he continues to win more tournaments.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS:

Easy: Who was the MVP of the first Super Bowl?

Moderate: Which basketball superstar is part of the official NBA logo?

Difficult: Who was the oldest player in Major League Baseball history to have ever bat in a game?

TRIVIA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE APRIL NEWSLETTER:

Easy: Who was the first major league baseball player to play all nine positions in one game?

Bert (Campy) Campenaris

Moderate: Which college men's basketball team won both the NIT and the NCAA tournaments in 1950?

City College of New York

Difficult: Which major league baseball franchise has the all-time highest winning percentage (not for one season, but all the years combined)?

New York Yankees

