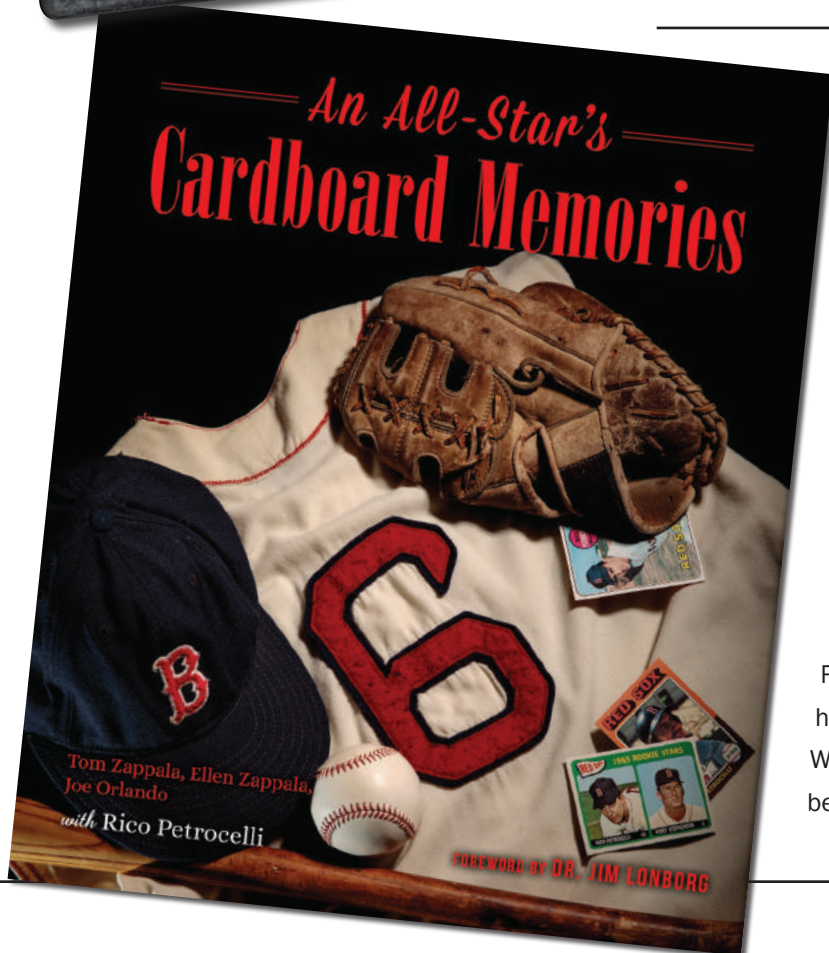




An All-Star's Cardboard Memories

Working with a team committed to the entertainment and education of sports memorabilia collectors, former Boston Red Sox shortstop Rico Petrocelli humanizes the men immortalized in Hall of Fame bronze and cardboard



Rico Petrocelli has memories – great ones! A power-hitter who played with the Boston Red Sox from 1963 until 1976, Petrocelli was the first shortstop in the American League to hit 40 home runs in a single season, a record that stood until Alex Rodriguez bettered him by two in 1998.

Getting called up to the majors in 1963 meant Petrocelli got to face some of the game's greatest pitchers and defend against many of its most legendary hitters. He also got to know a lot of them on a personal level.

"The greatest thing for me was getting called by the Red Sox at 20 because a lot of the big-name players I had been watching since I was a kid were still playing: Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, and Mickey Mantle, who had been my childhood idol," explains Petrocelli. "That was a

huge thrill for me – to actually be out on the field playing against these giants of the game.”

One of Petrocelli’s biggest thrills came early on in his career when the Red Sox were playing the New York Yankees.

“During my rookie season, I had my first encounter with Mickey Mantle,” Petrocelli recalls. “I had hit a single and Mickey was playing first base. As soon as I got to first, I just stood there and wondered if I should say anything to him. I’m thinking: ‘Mickey Mantle is right next to me! Should I say hello, introduce myself to him, or ask him how he’s doing?’ I didn’t know what

As the years went by, Petrocelli saw his wish come true. “I got to spend time with Mickey, who always loved to talk about New York,” Petrocelli remembers. “He loved everything about the city and that he was a part of the excitement of it all.”

Petrocelli also has fond memories of his teammate Tony Conigliaro and the legendary Roberto Clemente.

“I always enjoyed talking to Clemente,” says Petrocelli. “He loved to talk about his family. He was a very family oriented guy. And he was also very proud to be from Puerto Rico. He loved his country, and I have a lot of memories of the stories he would

The SANDY KOUFAX CARD

In the case of Koufax, there is no doubting the fact that his 1955 Topps #123 rookie card stands above the rest as the clear card to own of the baseball icon. While not as difficult to locate in high grade as the Clemente rookie, this card remains one of the major keys to the set, a set that has always been regarded as one of Topps' best productions. The Koufax rookie suffers from a few different condition obstacles, including supral centering and print defects that are easily visible in the light-colored background along the face of the card. The Koufax rookie is not considered rare by any means and it exists in much greater numbers than some of the regional issues mentioned earlier, yet the overwhelming popularity of the card keeps it in a secure spot as his ultimate card.

"Even if you are lucky enough to find an example, the 1967 Venezuelan Topps Koufax is brutally tough in high grade."

ONE CARD TO WATCH

We began with the Koufax rookie as the card to own, so we will end it with a card that appropriately wraps up his illustrious career, a card that offers the kind of scarcity that few of his other productions do. In 1967, Koufax's image can be found on a few different regular-issue Topps cards in the league leader categories, but he did not have a traditional card in the set. His 1966 Topps card was his last. That was the year he retired and some argue it was his best overall season. The next year, the 1967 Venezuelan Retirado set was released, and it was one that paid tribute to the greats of the past like Babe Ruth and Satchel Paige. Even though he had just left the game, they honored the recently-retired Koufax on card #162 of that set, a fitting tribute to one of the most dominant pitchers to ever suit up. Even if you are lucky enough to find an example, the 1967 Venezuelan Topps Koufax is brutally tough in high grade, with most known copies grading PSA VG-EX 4 or lower.

MICKEY MANTLE

WHEN IT COMES TO TALKING about Mickey Mantle, a lot goes through my mind. First and foremost, when I was a kid, he was my ultimate hero. Being from Brooklyn, I loved the Dodgers, but Mickey was my favorite player. I was only 22 years old when I played against Mantle for the first time. I was simply in awe. It was sometime in May of 1965. There I was, playing against the great Mickey Mantle in Yankee Stadium. It was a thrill that I will never forget. You know, I was only eight years old when Mickey broke in, so you can imagine how it felt to play against my idol. Wow! What a thrill. I remember when he got a home run, he hit the ball so hard and so far, it would just give you chills. By the time I got to play against Mantle his knees were pretty gone and he was near the end of his career. He still played left field at the time, but he switched to first base a couple of years later. In that first game, I got two hits off Al Downing.

As time went on, Mickey and I became pretty good friends. When he played first base, that's when we got to talk a bit. He always asked about the family and how things were going. Mickey was a very humble guy and didn't like to talk about himself too much, but we did talk baseball and how good the game had been to him. He told me to savor every minute of baseball, because it would be over before I knew it. It's pretty unbelievable, but I actually caught the last ball he hit in his career. It was off Jim Lonborg and it was a pop up. I sure wish I had kept that ball. I just casually tossed it on the mound while I was running back into the dugout. Little did I know at the time that he would be all done. I got to see Mantle hit his last home run, too. We were playing at Yankee Stadium in late September of 1968 when he drilled one off of Lonborg.

In 1967, when I made the All-Star team for the first time, it was a real kick to play on the same team as Mantle, Killebrew, and Brooks Robinson. Yaz and Conigliaro made the All-Star team that year, too. I'll never forget Mickey making his entrance into the clubhouse. We were all getting ready to go out onto the field, and in comes The Mick shaking hands

to do. And then I started to think: ‘What if I say something and he doesn’t respond or gives me a look and tells me to leave him alone?’”

“If that happened, I would have been crushed because he was my idol. I remember the count was two balls and no strikes on the hitter. I had been taking a few good leads off the base, and when I returned after one of them, we made eye contact for a moment and he said hello to me. That was a great thrill I’ll never forget, that Mickey Mantle said hi to me. I wished I could have stood there for an hour talking to him,” Petrocelli adds laughing.

tell me of his life there when he was growing up.”

As for Conigliaro, a player whose promising career suffered following a serious injury and who was plagued with poor health that would claim his life at the age of 45, Petrocelli’s voice lowers to a reverent tone as he remembers him.

“Tony C. had the ability to become a Hall of Famer,” Petrocelli opines. “He had a natural power swing and was a fearless hitter. He and I became great friends. We would go to his family’s home for the holidays, Christmas and Thanksgiving. He and his family were just like my family.”

Petrocelli says that from the time his playing days ended



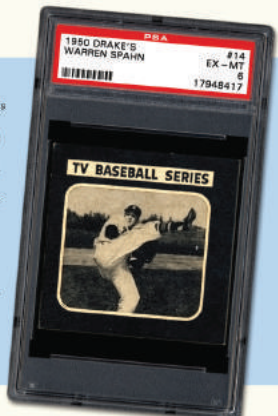
The WARREN SPAHN CARD

In the post-WWII card market, Hall of Famer rookie cards are extremely popular with collectors. Spahn, like some fellow stars of the period, didn't make his mainstream cardboard debut until several years after making his first appearance on the field. This was simply because there were no standard sets being made. The two cards that collectors deem as official Spahn rookies are his 1948 Bowman and 1948/49 Leaf cards. While both are desirable, the edge would have to go to the Leaf Spahn (#32) for the following reasons. Leaf cards, in general, are extremely tough to find in high grade due to condition obstacles such as poor centering and print defects. The Leaf Spahn has a clear edge in overall difficulty. Furthermore, the Leaf card is booming with color, giving it an edge in eye appeal versus the black-and-white Bowman card.

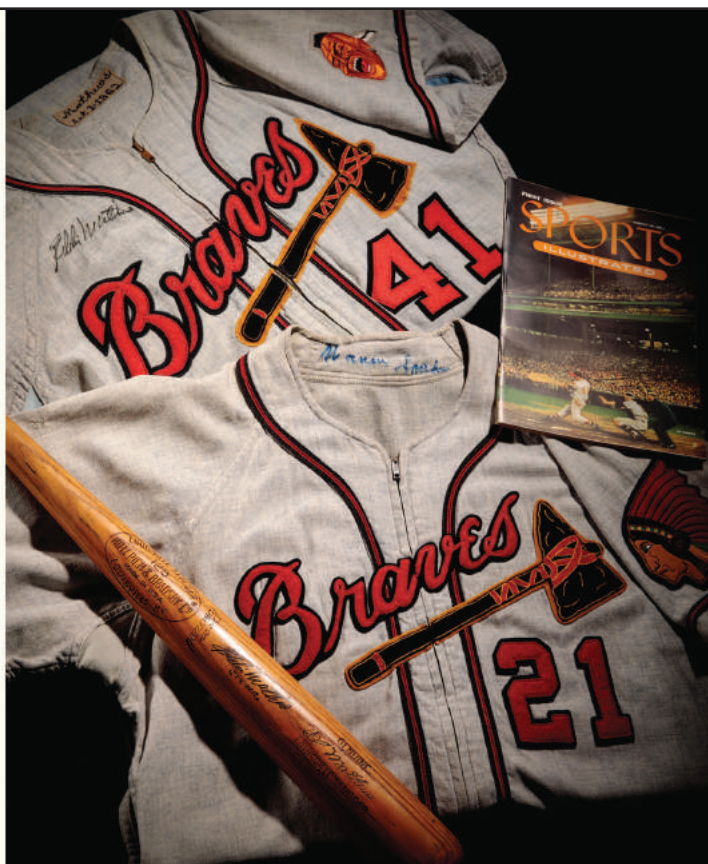
"The Leaf Spahn has a clear edge in overall difficulty."

ONE CARD TO WATCH

As we discussed earlier, Spahn made numerous appearances in various regional issues over the course of his career. Several of them possess great eye appeal, like his Red Man Tobacco and Red Heart Dog Food cards, while others are simply hard to find at all, like his 1947 Tip-Top Bread card. One regional set that combines an interesting concept along with a serious collector challenge is the 1950 Drake's issue. Distributed in packages of their cookies, these cards were subjected to serious handling. Each card was designed to look like a miniature television set, predating the 1955 Bowman design. These tough regional cards are surrounded by black borders, which show the slightest hint of wear, making high-grade examples very scarce. The set, while small at only 36 total cards, has better pound-for-pound star power than the previously mentioned Tip-Top Bread issue. In addition to the Spahn (#14), fellow Hall of Famers like Berra, Roy Campanella, and Duke Snider are included as well.



28 AN ALL-STAR'S CARDBOARD MEMORIES



The ROBERTO CLEMENTE CARD

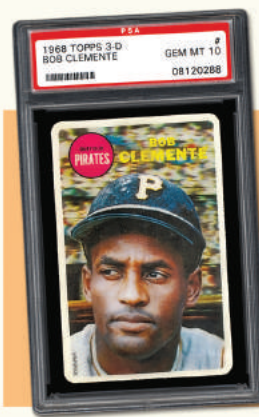
Without a shadow of a doubt, the Clemente card that garners the lion's share of collector attention is his 1955 Topps rookie card (#164). Along with debut singles of Koufax and Killebrew, the Clemente rookie anchors a set that many believe to be one of Topps' best overall productions. While the Koufax and Clemente cards offer tremendous visual appeal and are extraordinarily popular, one of the advantages the Clemente rookie has over the Koufax is its difficulty to find in high grade. The card is clearly more elusive in PSA NM-MT 8 or better than the Koufax, and the price for cards of that quality are reflected in the marketplace. There are Clemente cards that possess superior scarcity, but no other card can compete with his official rookie when it comes to demand.



"The Clemente rookie anchors a set that many believe to be one of Topps' best overall productions."

ONE CARD TO WATCH

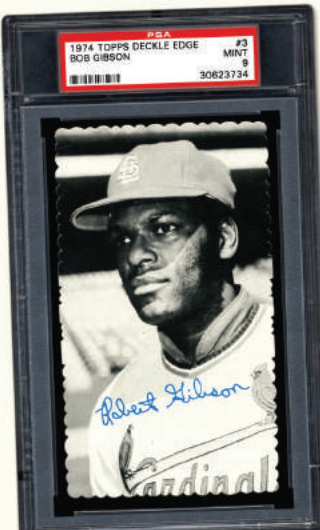
In every collectibles field, rarity becomes a greater and greater factor in valuation over time. The idea is that collectors love to own items that very few or no other collectors own. Pride of ownership should never be underestimated. When it comes to Clemente, there are a host of cards to choose from during his playing days, and some of them offer the exact kind of elusiveness that collectors clamor for. One Clemente card, however, offers a combination of scarcity and intrigue that is hard to beat. In 1968, Topps released another in a long line of test issues. Topps called this 12-card set 3-Ds, and these were no ordinary-looking cards. The images of the players were set against blurred backgrounds on the plastic fronts, creating a revolutionary 3-D effect. There is nothing like it from that decade or before, and with Clemente as the clear key in the set, it remains a card to watch in the future.



52 AN ALL-STAR'S CARDBOARD MEMORIES

BOB GIBSON

I'VE ALWAYS SAID THAT BOB GIBSON, along with Nolan Ryan, were the two toughest pitchers that I ever faced. They both threw nasty heat. Gibson always kept you off-balance because he was certainly not afraid to serve up a little chin music. Like other fireballers, he would use the top of the strike zone to make your life miserable. Gibson had great stuff. He threw in the middle-to-upper 90s. He had an excellent slider and a changeup that he threw occasionally, but he liked to throw the fastball and it was very tough to hit. Tim McCarver told me that every once in a while when he would walk out to the mound for a conference with Gibson, Bob would look at him like he had two heads. He would say to McCarver, "How can you possibly tell me anything about pitching?"



Get back behind the plate." McCarver would just smile and walk back. They were such a great tandem and great friends. I believe Tim caught more than 200 games for Gibson.

I faced Gibson several times in spring training, so going into the 1967 World Series against the Cards, I kind of knew what to expect from him. I knew he threw hard, and that he was a great pitcher. I knew he hated giving up hits, and he pitched mean. He would knock guys down. For the record, I was never brushed back when I came up to the plate. Gibson was one of those players who never wanted to get friendly with the opposition. No small talk, nothing. We were the enemy. If you got a hit off him, he would pitch very aggressively your next time up. He was not afraid to throw at anyone. Also, for a pitcher, he was outstanding defensively and he was a pretty good hitter. Gibson went out there to beat you. He was such a great competitor, and he worked fast, too. He kicked our ass in the 1967 Series. In Game One, I struck out three times against him. He was unbelievable. I did manage to get a double deep down the left field line off him in Game Seven. I remember

FROM WOOL TO DOUBLE KNOTS 55



and on through to today, people always ask him about the legendary players and Hall of Famers he played with and against.

“They want to know what these guys were like and what my impressions of them were,” says Petrocelli. “When I’m around young ballplayers today, they’re fascinated with the stories about these guys, some of whom have been gone since before they were even born. But they really listen when I tell them stories about Clemente, Mantle, and Aaron. They’re in awe, and I understand that, because I was in awe when I was around them. I’m still in awe when I remember my times with them.”

There were three other people who were also in awe of Petrocelli’s stories: his friend Tom Zappala, who co-hosts “The GR8 American Collectibles Show” podcast with Petrocelli, Tom’s wife, Ellen, who, along with her husband, has co-authored award-winning sports books, and Joe Orlando, CEO of Collectors Universe, Inc. and editor-in-chief of *Sports Market Report* (SMR).

That awe led to an idea, which, in turn, led to a fascinating new book, *An All-Star’s Cardboard Memories* (Peter E. Randall

Publisher, 2018), that features the personalities, playing styles, and baseball trading cards of over 50 Hall of Famers who played between 1960 and 1990.

From Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, and Sandy Koufax, to George Brett, Carlton Fisk, and Robin Yount, Petrocelli (with the help of the Zappalas) shares his memories and thoughts about these greats of the game, while Orlando offers insight on the rarity and popularity of each player’s baseball card issues.

“People who love baseball, who love the legends of the game, will love this book,” says Petrocelli. “It’s a collection of my memories of them as real people who had families, problems, and lives just like all of us. So many of them did great things for different charitable causes, or for people who needed help, or for their communities. They were leaders. They led by being examples to young players – guys just coming up who were down because they were in a hitting slump or something.”

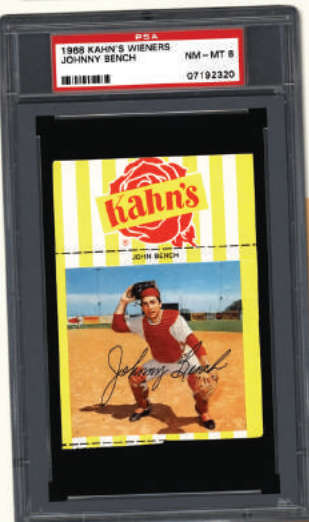
“These guys were flesh-and-blood human beings who cared a lot about the game and about their teammates and the fans. They made a commitment to be the best they could





The JOHNNY BENCH CARD

During the 1960s, Topps started to produce rookie cards that featured more than one player. Some of the biggest names in baseball history had to share the limelight with at least one other person when they made their hobby debut. Bench was one of them. In 1968, Bench is featured on a horizontal Topps card along with teammate and pitcher Ron Tompkins. Tompkins never reached stardom, but his batterymate earned enough accolades for both of them. The Bench rookie card (#247) is certainly not considered a condition rarity, but it is the Bench issue that generates the most attention from collectors. For those seeking PSA Mint 9s or higher, keep in mind that the centering does vary on this card, and the pattern along the edges and corners can mask wear. Furthermore, the solid orange/yellow backs are susceptible to chipping. A very young Bench is pictured with his cap on backwards, something catchers often did prior to the universal use of the plastic helmet. Along with a debut single of Nolan Ryan, this Bench card is one of two key rookies in the popular 508-card set.



ONE CARD TO WATCH

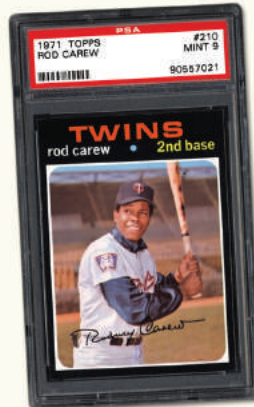
There is no doubt that Bench's only mainstream rookie card is his 1968 Topps issue. That said, another Bench card was produced that same year. In this case, the card is larger, more colorful, and much tougher to locate than his regular Topps rookie. Kahn's, the Cincinnati-area meat company, produced small regional sets for many years before Bench came along. These oversized cards measure approximately 2 1/4" by 4 1/4", and each one was designed with an advertising tab that could be removed by hand. They even included a dotted line to help guide the collector. Today, most collectors prefer that the cards remain intact, since the Kahn's logo adds visual appeal. The blank-backed set only contains 38 subjects, but there are numerous variations throughout. When it comes to Bench, however, there is only one version. The eye-popping card pictures Bench removing his catcher's mask and the image is draped with a facsimile signature. The 1968 Kahn's Bench card is a perfect tribute to the man that would become the greatest catcher in baseball history.

96 AN ALL-STAR'S CARDBOARD MEMORIES

ROD CAREW

I PLAYED AGAINST ROD CAREW for most of my career. That's when he was with Minnesota. Rod was one of the greatest pure hitters of all time. He could hit to all fields, hit with a little power, and boy, could he hit for average. No wonder he was the league batting champ so many times. One time we even tried to hit him in the rear end, but it was like trying to hit a moving target. When I played shortstop, he would frustrate the heck out of me. If you played him in the hole, he'd hit up the middle. If you played in the middle, he'd hit through the hole. His bat control and eyesight were unbelievable. Rod would wait until the last second, and you could almost see his eyes follow the ball right through the swing. To me, it looked like the ball stood still at contact. He could hit it anywhere.

Rod was just a terrific guy. We talked a lot about hitting, and he even explained his approach to hitting a baseball to me, but to hit like him was almost impossible. Nobody could hit like him. Carew had his own unique style. Later on, I'd say Tony Gwynn and Wade Boggs came the closest. We used to joke about how I would try to defend him.



I told him that when he came up to bat, I might as well just go to the bench and sit down. We had a good laugh about that. He was an expert at fouling off the tough pitch. Whether it was low and away, or up and in, he had the uncanny ability to hang in with those pitches.

I had the honor and pleasure of playing with Rod in both the 1967 and 1969 All-Star Games. He was at second and I was at short. I looked it up and it was pretty funny. Rod and I were a combined 1-for-10 in those two games. Of course, Carew was just starting out with the Twins in 1967, and he was Rookie of the Year that year. We beat that Twins team on the last day of the season, and later on in the afternoon, clinched the American League pennant when California beat Detroit.

When Rod was on third base, you had to watch out because he had the talent to steal home. He stole home so many times in his career. I remember in the late 1960s Carew stole home seven times one year. He had such a great career. Rod's batting average was .328 and he had over 3,000 hits. He was an All-Star every single year he played for the Twins, and after Rod joined the Angels in 1979, he was an All-Star every year except his last. When we played against each other, I always admired

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD 97

The JIM RICE CARD

In 1975, Topps issued one of its best sets of the decade. The multi-colored design and outstanding star selection keeps this 660-card set on the minds of active collectors. Aside from the 1972 Topps offering, perhaps no other set captured the period as well as the 1975 issue did through the look of the cards alone. The set, which has two cards of the legendary Hank Aaron operating as bookends, contains several key rookie cards. The Hall of Famers who made their debut here include Rice, along with George Brett, Gary Carter, and Robin Yount, not to mention a rookie card of fan-favorite Keith Hernandez. The Rice rookie (#616) showcases the young slugger along with three other outfield prospects, Dave Augustine, Pepe Mangual, and John Scott. Unlike Brett and Yount, Rice had to share the limelight on his rookie much like Gary Carter in the same set. Keep in mind that a mini version of the same card was released by Topps. While the Minis are not rare, they are tougher to find than their regular-sized counterparts. Poor centering, chipping along the colored edges, and print defects are all condition obstacles to be aware of on this card.



ONE CARD TO WATCH

While hundreds of Rice cards were issued during his playing days, there aren't too many that stand out from the rest of the pack in a major way. One exception to that rule is a card that was technically issued prior to the start of his big-league career. It was very common for players to sharpen their skills in the off season. One way they could achieve this was to participate in winter league baseball. Before Rice stepped into the batter's box at Fenway, he terrorized pitchers in Venezuela. The 1973 Venezuelan League Sticker set featured local talent and some American prospects, like Rice, who were trying to make it to the majors. These stickers were issued with albums so each sticker could be affixed inside, which unfortunately means that many of the Rice examples (#78) have back damage and grade very low from a technical standpoint. For the Rice collector seeking the ultimate challenge, this pre-rookie card is for you.

132 AN ALL-STAR'S CARDBOARD MEMORIES

MIKE SCHMIDT

IN MY OPINION, MIKE SCHMIDT is the greatest third baseman to play the game in the modern era. Not only was he a tremendous fielder with great range and a cannon for an arm but he was also a great hitter and RBI guy. All around, I think Brooksie had just as good range and soft hands, but he could not hit as well as Schmidt. Mike had it all and he made it look easy.

Mike and I only played in the majors at the same time for about four years. At the beginning, Mike struck out a lot but then he started to put the bat on the ball and began driving it. I loved the way he was playing, and already hitting for power. Mike once told me the thing that got him on his home run drive was an adjustment he made at the plate. Ted Williams was a disciple of hitting up on the ball and Bobby Doerr preached that you should hit down on the ball. After Schmidt started using the Doerr method, he started getting on top of the ball and the ball began jumping off the bat. He became one of the most feared hitters in the National League. If he had not made this adjustment, Mike told me he would not have had anywhere near as many home runs as he did.



I spent some time with Mike when I was working for one of the networks, and I used to go down to Philly to do the game. The Philly fans got on Mike a little bit at the end of his career as his skills began to diminish somewhat. That can be tough for a player. Even so, Philly fans consider Mike Schmidt to be the greatest player of all time in the history of their team. Mike was not a very emotional guy on the field, and I think some people thought he was being a little aloof. In reality, Mike was as cool as a cucumber and that was part of his greatness.

Schmidt holds a ton of fielding records and his Gold Glove Awards are in the double digits. He was excellent at coming in on the bunt and making the play. As a former third baseman, I can really appreciate how great a player guys like Mike and Brooksie were. I took a look at Mike's stats and they are fantastic. He had 12 All-Star appearances, he won the National League MVP Award three times, and he hit 548 home runs. When I take his numbers and put them all together, Schmidt is my starting third baseman on the All-Time All-Star team, at least in the modern era. I haven't seen Mike in years, but I spoke to him not too long ago on my radio show. He has kept a pretty low profile recently. I know that he has had some medical issues, and I'm glad that he is fine right now. As one former third baseman to another, I tip my cap to him. He was the best at what he did.


THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD 133

be on the field. They went out there and performed every day. But, they also had a commitment to their family and the people they met. They weren't perfect. They failed at times and had flaws just like everybody does. I got to see these guys who will be remembered forever – guys who are icons. I'm so grateful I had that opportunity, the chance to see them in the flesh and get to know them. Sure, they were legends. But they were also human beings, which is what this book is about."

SMR caught up with Tom and Ellen Zappala as they were putting the finishing touches on *An All-Star's Cardboard Mem-*

different. The idea came from my radio co-host Rico Petrocelli.

Over the years, Rico and I have become good friends, and while I knew quite a bit about his career with the Red Sox, I never really gave much thought to the extremely interesting era in which he played. It was an era that overlapped two generations of baseball. When he was a rookie, he played with the greats like Willie Mays, Sandy Koufax, and Don Drysdale. Then, by the time he finished his career, he was playing with Dennis Eckersley, Goose Gossage, and George Brett. So, his career stretched over two very distinct generations of the game.



1971 TOPPS
BERT BLYLEVEN
#26
GEM MT
10
31548750

THE BERT BLYLEVEN CARD

In 1971, Topps created its most challenging regular set of the decade. In the 1960s, Topps had tried the concept of colored borders. They used a solid wood grain design in 1962, a partial colored border in 1963, and a pattern-style border in 1968. Just one year earlier, Topps framed their baseball cards with a gray-colored border in the 1970 set. All of that experimentation led to their beautiful but brutal 1971 Topps issue, an issue that is surrounded with black edges. Oh, the humanity! If you are a collector who likes high-grade cards and are looking for a fight, this is the set for you. As you would expect, the black edges on the front are easily chipped and reveal the slightest touch of wear. In addition to the fragile borders, the cards are often found with varying degrees of print defects on their face, not to mention less than desirable centering. If the black edges on the front weren't bad enough, the backs are framed in green. The entire set is difficult to find in PSA NM-MT 8 condition or better, but the Blyleven debut (#26) is even tougher than the average 1971 Topps card and it remains the only Hall of Fame rookie card therein.



1975 TOPPS MINI
GEORGE BRETT
#228
GEM MT
10
06015956

GEORGE BRETT

WITHOUT A DOUBT, GEORGE BRETT was one of the toughest outs I've ever seen. George had no weakness at the plate. He could hit the ball to all fields, hit for power, and hit for average. He was outstanding. In the era of Carew, Boggs, and Tony Gwynn, Brett was right up there. I'd say he was one of the best hitters of his time. Brett did an adequate job at third base for Kansas City when he started out. At that time, the AstroTurf made playing at the Royals Stadium very difficult. They had the bases outlined and there was a seam. Oh my goodness, that seam made it extremely difficult. Even if the ball didn't hit the seam, it was still a tough play because you couldn't really charge the ball. Brett adjusted to it and he became a very good third baseman. That Kansas City team with Hal McRae, Willie Wilson, John Mayberry, and the rest of those guys was pretty darn good.



1985 TOPPS MINI
BERT BLYLEVEN
#355
GEM MT
10
15708399

ONE CARD TO WATCH

Ten years after trying their hand at a smaller version of their base set in 1975, Topps decided to experiment with the diminutive design again. The 1985 Topps Mini set was never intended for public distribution, but as is the case with most test issues, the cards eventually found their way into the marketplace. It is believed that only 100 cards of each player in the 132-card set were produced, creating an extreme rarity for Blyleven collectors (card #355). The 132 total cards represent one full sheet and each one was printed on white stock, which gave the cards a brighter appearance than the regular 1985 Topps cards. In fact, the Topps Minis look more like the Topps Traded or O-Pee-Chee cards from the same year, which would make sense because these cards were allegedly printed by O-Pee-Chee in order to test new printing equipment. The Topps Minis are roughly 10% smaller than their standard-sized counterparts and a scant number of the subjects on the sheet were Hall of Famers.



1990 DONRUSS
GEORGE BRETT
AQUEOUS TEST
#144
NM
7
15628676

You know, before George came up to the Royals, his brother pitched for us. Ken Brett was probably just 18 or 19 years old when came to Boston, but he had good potential. He was only with us for a couple of years, but he pitched in the 1967 Series. Now, George had a beautiful swing. I played against him at the beginning of his career. It was pretty amazing. He could hit the wall any time he wanted. He was really that good. Brett would either hit doubles or hit the ball out of the ballpark, and what a clutch hitter. If there were a couple of men on base when he came up to bat—Bang! He was a tremendous hitter.

George was with the Royals his entire career, and like I said, some of those teams were great. The Royals battled the Yankees for the championship a few years in a row in the late 1970s and early 1980s and they won it in 1985. I remember Brett got close to .400 one year. That was in 1980. We followed him closely in Boston since Ted Williams was the last to hit that number. I believe Brett was MVP that year. What a competitor. He got so many hits—over 3,000—and he was the league batting champ a few times. It seemed like he was an All-Star every year during his prime. The fact that he was voted into the Hall of Fame on the first ballot just shows how talented he was.

152 AN ALL-STAR'S CARDBOARD MEMORIES

THE NEW YOUNG GUNS 155

ories, which will be released in August at the National Sports Collectors Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.

As authors of the magnificent sports collectibles books *The T206 Collection: The Players & Their Stories*, *The Cracker Jack Collection: Baseball's Prized Players*, *The 100 Greatest Baseball Autographs*, and *Legendary Lumber: The Top 100 Player Bats in Baseball History*, Tom weighed in on the impetus for their current tome.

Tom Zappala (TZ): A while back, Joe Orlando and I were chatting about the books we've done and how they have been well received. During our conversation, I told him about an idea I had for another book that would be something a little

During those 13 years that he played, he would bump into these guys at events and play against them in spring training, during the season, and at All-Star Games. He got to know a lot of players pretty well, and when they would see one another, they would catch-up on their families, talk about the game, and life in general.

So, I asked Joe for his feelings about my idea, which was for Ellen and me to do a series of interviews with Rico about his memories of all the legends and Hall of Famers he played with or against. I then thought it would be great if Joe would write narratives on the cards of those players. Joe said he thought it was a great idea, so I ran it past Rico, who also loved the idea,

and we were off doing another book.

Sports Market Report (SMR): There are a couple of players in the book who Rico didn't play with or against or weren't Hall of Famers. What was the reason for their inclusion?

TZ: Yes, there are a few we felt we had to include, like Tony Conigliaro. He had been Rico's best friend. He was in Rico's wedding, and Rico was a pallbearer at his funeral. That makes for a poignant and emotional part of the book because Rico talks about when Tony got hit by that pitch and how he never fully came back after that – how he ended up having a heart

There are a lot of stories like that in the book which showcase the human side of these guys.


He talks about why he thought Drysdale would throw pitches at batters to keep them off balance and offers his perspective on facing some of the greatest pitchers of all time like Nolan Ryan, Sandy Koufax, and Bob Gibson.

SMR: With all the great stories Rico has, how did you decide on which ones to use?

TZ: That was a big challenge; the book could have easily been twice the size with all the stories.

The CARLTON FISK CARD


The 787-card 1972 Topps set remains one of the most popular productions from the decade. Collectors are attracted to the eye-catching design, one that is fitting for the period, and the tremendous star selection throughout. With all the big names contained therein, the only Hall of Famer rookie is that of Fisk (#79). Like many rookie cards of the day, Fisk shared the spotlight with other prospects. This time, teammates Mike Garman and Cecil Cooper were pictured along with the future Cooperstown member. Even though Fisk made brief appearances in 1969 and 1971, he would be named the AL Rookie of the Year in 1972, after playing in 131 games for the Red Sox. He also won his first and last Gold Glove that year as well. The card, while not overly difficult to find in PSA NM-MT 8 condition, is somewhat challenging to locate in PSA Gem Mint 10. Condition obstacles include less than optimal centering and the presence of print defects on the face of the card.



"The 1993 Topps Finest Refractor provides the perfect hobby walk-off for the man that, arguably, hit the most famous walk-off of all time."

ONE CARD TO WATCH

The 1990s ushered in a new era of baseball card production. No longer were the cards from the base sets considered the cards to own. It was the time of the parallels. For better or worse, manufacturers started focusing their energy on creating more and more limited-edition cards, those that would end up being described as "chase" cards later in the decade. The granddaddy of these sets is the 1993 Topps Finest Refractor issue, which contains one of Fisk's last cards (#125). There was a time when no other modern-era set generated more demand or attention than this trailblazing creation. Each card in the set had a reported print run of 241, which meant that about one Refractor was inserted into every Topps box. The cards are surprisingly tough to find in PSA 10. This is a result of marginal centering and a vulnerable surface. This 1993-card set was made during Fisk's final season. The 1993 Topps Finest Refractor provides the perfect hobby walk-off for the man that, arguably, hit the most famous walk-off of all time.




RICH "GOOSE" GOSSAGE

WHEN GOOSE GOSSAGE WAS A YOUNG STARTER

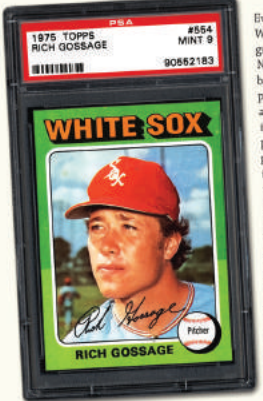
for the White Sox, I faced him for the first time. That was back in 1972. Rich had a slider, but that wasn't his best pitch. He threw a fastball that would tail into righties about eight to ten inches. It was a really heavy fastball. A couple of years later, the White Sox made Gossage a relief pitcher and I faced him then as well. A lot of the guys thought Rich was intimidating but I got my hits off him—you know, off the handle, or a few bloopers—really nothing major. Once he became a closer, Gossage had great success. He was one of the very first dominant closers in baseball and he pitched a ton of innings. By that time, Rich had one pitch, a fastball. He had tremendous control of that pitch and could top off in the very high 90s. The thing I liked about him was that he worked very quickly when he was on the mound.

You know, Gossage can still throw. I faced him a few years ago in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Some of the old Red Sox and old Yankees got together for a charity event.



Even though it was an exhibition game, it was kind of competitive. We went about six innings in front of about 10,000 people. It was great fun to play with Gossage, Bucky Dent, Oscar Gamble, Graig Nettles, Jim Rice, and a bunch of others. I played a little third base. Actually, the best part of the game was watching Mike Torrez pitch to Bucky Dent. Bucky hit one to the warning track and we all had a good laugh. Of course, in 1978 Bucky broke our backer in that playoff game, hitting the home run off Torrez when he pitched for the Red Sox. When I talk with Goose about today's pitchers, he is pretty critical. Since relief pitchers only play one inning now, he thinks they are babies. During his career, Rich typically went two or three innings in relief. He is not a big fan of the pitch count either. Of course, we both agreed that in today's game, you need a great closer to win it all. So many teams come back strong in the ninth inning now.

It's amazing how many teams Gossage played with. I think it was something like 10 or 11. Baseball was a business and Rich clearly understood that. Sometimes he would get traded, and sometimes he would sign with the highest bidder. It didn't matter. Wherever he went, he excelled. His best years were with the White Sox, Yankees, and the Padres. Those were his All-Star years. He led the American League in saves several times during that period, but he was the closer for the Yankees when



attack and a stroke and dying in his forties.

SMR: Can you give our readers a sense of what they will find in your new book?

TZ: Well, I can tell you what they won't find: some behind-the-scenes stories that Rico told me we couldn't print [laughs]. But what they will find is a unique look at the human side of these guys who are historic figures – icons.

One of the stories that comes to mind is Rico's memories of Yogi Berra. Rico grew up in New York and he became really good friends with Yogi because of the Italian connection. When they would see one another they didn't talk baseball, they would talk about their families and recipes – how to make great sauce.

SMR: Do you have a favorite story?

TZ: I think the Mickey Mantle stories are favorites because Rico so greatly admired him. One story that stands out is from his first All-Star Game. Mantle was at the end of his career, and his age and lifestyle were taking their toll. Rico remembers Mantle walking into the locker room late and getting all taped up. He then went out to the plate, took three pitches, swung for three strikes, put his bat down, said goodbye to the guys, and that was it; he was back in the locker room, changed, out to a cab, and gone.

Another little interesting tidbit is that Rico caught the last ball Mantle ever hit. He remembers catching it and then tossing



it on the mound as he ran off the field. Of course, he regrets not keeping that ball. Imagine if that was still around – the very last ball Mantle ever hit.

I also thought his memories of Orlando Cepeda were interesting. He said that Cepeda reminded him of the character Pedro Cerrano in the film *Major League*. He always had the Latin music going, and he made Rico drink these energy drinks he made from papaya, pineapple, and other exotic stuff

5

Mentors, Heroes, and Friends

Rico and I are sitting at a table at the Greater Boston Sports Collectibles Show. He is signing his book, and Ellen and I are signing our book. It's the last day of the show and the crowd has thinned out considerably. We start talking about some of the Hall of Famers who were working in baseball in either a managerial capacity or administrative position at the time that Rico played. In one case, although retired, one of these greats actually competed in a game against the Red Sox and surprised everyone. Every one of these men had a dramatic impact on the game, some more than others. In any event, they were all legendary players.

There is one more player that we are including in the book. No, he is not a Hall of Famer, but had his career not taken a tragic turn, he very well may have been. Tony Conigliaro was one of Rico's best friends. In 1967 Tony was struck in the face with an errant pitch, a pitch that still resonates in Boston baseball history to this day.

As a special tribute to a player that just may have made it to The Hall of Fame, we have included Rico's thoughts on Tony C.



MENTORS, HEROES, AND FRIENDS 179

that would make him gag. There's just so many of those kind of stories – stories that really humanize these iconic players.

An All-Star's Cardboard Memories is a collaborative effort by authors Tom and Ellen Zappala, Collectors Universe CEO Joe Orlando, Red Sox Hall of Famer Rico Petrocelli, a foreword by Dr. Jim Lonborg, and stunning photographs by Christina Good. The book will be released at the 2018 National Sports Collectors Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, and will also be available at www.tomzappalamedia.com. Please feel free to contact SMR at SMR@PSAcard.com if you have any questions or comments.

Cultivating and Igniting the Cardboard Collectors

When it comes to hearing and sharing great stories about professional athletes, sports cards, sports memorabilia collectors, and their collections, few, if any, have heard and shared more than Joe Orlando.

In his role as the CEO of Collectors Universe, Inc., president of Professional Sports Authenticator (PSA), and the editor-in-chief of *Sports Market Report* (SMR), Orlando has dedicated his professional career to strengthening the sports collectibles hobby through third-party authentication and grading and by providing information and relevant content to collectors of every genre and level.

As a part of his commitment to sharing educational and

entertaining information, Orlando has collaborated with Tom and Ellen Zappala on five sports-collecting related books including their latest offering, *An All-Star's Cardboard Memories*.

Sports Market Report (SMR): Working with the Zappalas, you have compiled an impressive canon of work that has tremendous appeal to sports memorabilia and card collectors. What are your feelings about this latest addition?

Joe Orlando (JO): To begin with, I can't believe this is the fifth book we have worked on together. It just goes to show that time really does fly. The first two focused on specific baseball card sets: the 1909-11 T206 and 1914/15 Cracker Jack issues. We then turned our sights to autographs and professional

model bats for the following two books.

Before we embarked on the current project, Tom and I had a conversation about bringing the attention back to cards. This time, however, we wanted to cover a much wider array of cards instead of just covering one or two sets. It didn't take long for the concept to develop once Tom mentioned that Rico Petrocelli wanted to be involved and share his experiences on the field.

We looked at Rico's fantastic career and realized that he shared an era with some of the biggest names in baseball history. After Tom and Ellen compiled the list of Hall of Famers who Rico either played with or against, the book almost wrote itself. Rico could share personal stories about each of these legends and I could help provide a basic recap of their career in collectibles. The book is extremely visual and a great way to introduce new collectors to our wonderful hobby.

SMR: Is there any particular story in the book you especially enjoy as a diehard baseball fan?

JO: Well, I don't want to give too much away before it comes out, but I enjoyed Rico's stories and perspectives throughout the book. From getting yelled at by Ted Williams for taking an elderly Warren Spahn deep during an Old-Timers' Game at Fenway Park to Frank Robinson's competitive nature on the field after being knocked down in the batter's box, the stories are terrific. Rico wasn't just a spectator with a front row seat. He was an All-Star in his own right, playing alongside these legends year after year.

SMR: When it comes to the cards of the players featured in the book, how were they selected?

JO: Each section of the book contains a summary of the cards and collectibles that were manufactured bearing the player's likeness during their active playing days. Of course, we were limited on space, so it would be impossible to cover every card or interesting story about that player's collectibles, but we wanted to provide a snapshot for each legend.

Following the summary, and to close each player section, we identified two interesting cards. The first is called "The Card" and the second is "One Card to Watch." The first card is self-explanatory. This is the card the hobby-at-large considers the most important for that player. In most cases, this is the player's mainstream rookie card, but there are a few exceptions to that rule. The second card allowed for much more subjectivity and creative leeway.

There were no exact criteria used during the selection process. In some cases, a great rarity was selected. In others, a slightly overlooked issue that may be an affordable alternative or one with a bright future was chosen. The key was to make sure that these picks were interesting, for one reason or another.

SMR: Did this book give you the opportunity to feature a card (or cards) that you feel haven't been given their due?

JO: I think the "One Card to Watch" section for each player really gave us the opportunity to discuss some cards that don't always get enough coverage or attention.

Sometimes, it's because the card issue may be perceived as somewhat esoteric since it isn't offered for sale anywhere near the frequency that more mainstream cards are. There are other cases where we thought a specific card deserved a closer look because, upon review, it's surprising the issue isn't more widely collected in today's market.

Furthermore, inside the initial hobby summaries for each player, we tried to include some interesting stories about everything from lesser known collectibles to scarce variations. Since we weren't limited to one player, set, or era, it really enabled us to cover more ground. The collectibles discussed in this book were produced over six different decades.

SMR: All someone would need to do is look through the first couple pages of *An All-Star's Cardboard Memories* to be intrigued by the stories and beautiful images. We have to know, did you have as much fun working on this book as people will have reading it?

JO: As always, it was a real pleasure working with the Zapalas. Tom and Ellen are real pros and having an outstanding former player like Rico involved really lends credibility to the book.

I loved the concept from the beginning because it blends the love of the game itself with the hobby. You don't have to be a hardcore collector to appreciate and enjoy it, and I think that's important.

At Collectors Universe, we believe in creating and presenting informative content to collectors of all genres. Providing educational information in an appealing way is one of the most important factors when it comes to strengthening the collectibles hobby and cultivating new collectors. It is also a way in which we can help encourage dormant collectors who were once active to get involved again by igniting the fire within them.