



For the young, they are pretty pictures

Card collectors meet as costs keep rising

By MARY CONNELLY
You can't play poker with them. But you can sure make some money if you have a full hand. Baseball cards are appreciating in value as more collectors begin stockpiling the dog-eared bubble gum give-aways.

Most sports-crazed collectors will continue filling show boxes with photos of Roberto Clemente or Willie Horton without regard to financial planning. But others are combing sports collectors conventions throughout the country as a substitute for dealing with Wall Street.

Extravaganza held in the Hilton Inn, Troy, last weekend.

MRS. MICHALOWICZ and her husband, Joe, spent \$1,000 for a baseball card at the convention last year.

"If I had \$1,000 today I'd put it in cards, not stocks," said 25-year-old John Stirling of Ohio. Stirling counts a \$3,000 card set in his collection.

"Three years ago there was a big inflation in the value of the cards. Anybody into collecting before three years ago has made money."

"Three years ago there was a big hard-core collectors nationwide," Stirling estimated. Today, the figure is 5,000, he said.

The increased demand for baseball cards does not mean every slugger's photograph is worth a 14-carat gold frame. But surfacing from the thousands of pictures of 1974 best-sellers, Al Kaline and Hank Aaron are rarities.

THERE ARE, for example, the 11 discovered prints of a 1910 Honus Wagner cigarette baseball card. The cards have made collectors wealthy because 60 prints of the legendary Pittsburgh Pirate shortstop were produced even though he refused to be associated with tobacco products.

Twenty-one-year-old Bill Mastro of New Jersey made a trip to the bank to add a Honus Wagner to his card collection, valued at \$15,000.

"I wanted the card. I needed the card to complete a set," Mastro said of his \$1,500 Wagner print. "I didn't have the money. I had to borrow it."

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Uniformity of size and shape does not mean uniformity of value to the collector

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