



Type Set Collecting

Type set collectors are a different breed. Instead of hot rookies, star cards or complete sets, they get their kicks with a 1970 LaPizza Royale or 1928 Yuenglings Ice Cream card. For type set collectors, 1987 has been a busy year.

By George Vrechek

Collectors decide on various goals. Some start collecting cards of immediate interest — either cards they collected as a kid or cards of current players.

Many complete-set collectors go through a period of trying to collect every major set possible and then every card possible. This affliction usually doesn't last very long. The collector soon is aware that the cards are just too numerous, too expensive, too obscure,

or too meaningless to search out.

One way that a collector could stay active, yet not too frustrated, would be to collect "type" cards. Rather than trying to complete the 1948 Leaf set or the T202 Hassan Triple Folders, you can decide to collect just one common card representative of each set. There are a few such collectors around who get more excited finding a 1970 LaPizza Royale, a 1950 Num Num or a 1928 Yuenglings Ice Cream than they do in finding an

Eric Davis in a common pile.

Type card collecting means that you don't need the set of 1977 Topps clambacks — just one would be fine to accomplish the goal. A few more oddball issues came in 1977, but without too much effort you could keep track of issues and search them out. Life was simple.

Not any more. Because of competi-

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tion between manufacturers, licensing through the Players Association, and the general increase in collecting interest, there has been a virtual explosion of new issues. Keeping track of them has been more of a challenge than most collectors desire. I am not a type card expert, but I have tried to keep track of new issues. To further control what I wanted to find, I decided that I would just track baseball cards of major leaguers that were not "collector's issues." Even those criteria were hard to follow. I included older minor league issues such as Sunbeam, Smith's Clothing, Sommer & Kaufman and '49 Bowman PCL. Then I began expanding the definition of "cards" by adding discs, first Wiffle ball then 7-11 Discs. Tattoos and coins followed. Then "collector issues" and team issues got harder to define.

Lee Temanson checklisted in *SCD* 172 different issues in 1986 — and that only through about October. Temanson, however, includes minor league sets and collector issues that I haven't had the tenacity to keep track of. His is the more complete work.

At any rate, using the George Vrecheck Less-than-Perfect system of listing new issues, you can easily see the magnitude of the increase in sets. Since 1904, there have been 1,228 issues meeting the above loose definition. The lean years of World Wars I and II of course produced few issues (4 issues between 1942 and 1945 for example and about the same number between 1917 and 1919). The early "boom years" of 1910 and 1933 produced 25 issues and 12 issues respectively.

The number of issues in each decade since 1900 are roughly as follows. "Roughly" means that it's presumptuous to think that I have been able to list every issue, sort of like thinking you have collected every card.

Decade	Number of Issues
1900-1909	17
1910-1919	88
1920-1929	58
1930-1939	70
1940-1949	61
1950-1959	126
1960-1969	176
1970-1979	203
1980-1987	429

A typical year in the 50's produced about 12 different issues. In 1957 was, for example, the regular Topps issue, Hygrade Meats, Swift Franks, Kahn's, Sohio Gas and Ed-U-Cards. By the late 70s, 20-plus issues per year were common — Topps, Kellogg, Burger King, Hostess, Shakey's, SSPC, etc.

Competition came in 1981 and the number of issues increased modestly to 21. But in 1982 and 1983 it was up to 38 each year. 1984 was 59 issues. 1985 reached 67, 1986 had 98, and so far for 1987 I have found 99 issues. Every *SCD* seems to feature at least one or two new issues.

Trying to keep track of the issues is hard enough. Trying to collect them is conceivable but expensive. Temanson estimated the cost at \$3,055 just for the 1986 issues! Most new issues are geared to trying to get you to collect the whole set. The challenge then becomes trying to obtain just a card or two of the Topps glossy issues, Star Co. issues or team issues without spending the considerable amounts to buy the entire set.

A few issues are genuinely a challenge

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There were boxed sets coming out of everywhere this year. Just trying to keep track of them, let alone

collecting them, was a full-time task. Eight of the more popular boxed sets are shown above.

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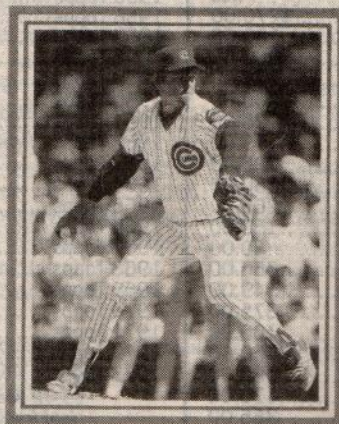
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trying to collect and can only be found in ones and twos. Cain's discs, Dorman's cheese, Drake's, Kitty Clover are all tough. Some issues like the White Sox game issue cards ought to be difficult, due to their weekly distribution. But, they miraculously turn up through "channels" as complete sets.

The "Big Three" had their regular issues in '87. Topps again had their glossies, inserts, send-away premiums, regular issue and update glossy versions. Topps dropped the 3-Ds and Super issues which seemed to have produced luke-warm response. Donruss returned for the fifth year in a row with their larger version. Topps' Major League Leaders minis again matched Fleer's mini set. Topps dropped the Rub Downs and tattoos as did O-Pee-Chee. Topps and Fleer had their sticker issues. Fleer had "Limited Editions" — an overworked term to say the least.

We missed the Big League Chew of

CHICAGO CUBS



(37) ED LYNCH, RHP

Several issues returned in '87. The Cubs annual "Baseball Card Day" set was sponsored this year by David Berg hotdogs.

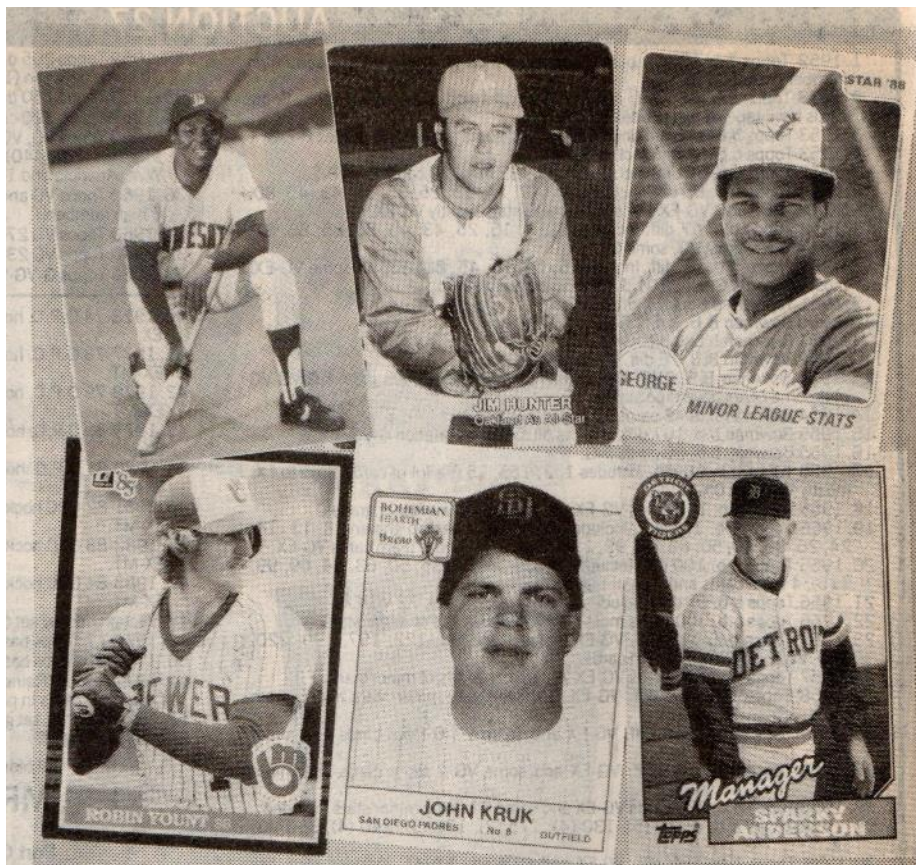
1986 which produced the interesting Home Run Legends series. The set was small, had to be purchased one at a time with the gum, and certainly had the bubble gum card smell that has been missing from most issues of late.

The Drakes set was a challenge for change and involved keeping the whole box. Burger King issued cards in the east after several years absence from the hobby. Hard-to-find issues (for me) included Ice Tea Discs, Leaf Candy City Team, and Hostess and General Mills Canadian issues.

Slurpee 7-11 discs were popular again. Boxed sets came out of my ears. I can't begin to recite the litany of those issues. I'll wait for Temanson or others to do that. The Star Company issued sets for a number of players again. The Star Co. issues are among the hardest to find sold in singles.

Police sets included Blue Jays, Brewers and Dodgers again. The White Sox gave out two cards at a time at the

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Some more 1987 sets are pictured. But what about 1988? Chances are type set collectors will have even a bigger task on their hands if they want to collect one card of every set.

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games. Mothers' Cookies were distributed at games in a similar manner as last year. The Cubs sponsor for baseball card day went from Gatorade to David Berg. Cleveland's went from O'Henry to Gatorade. Smokey the Bear's Angels and many other "Smokies" reappeared in '87.

The major companies continued their approach of coming up with new sets with an emphasis on stars and rookies. More food producers tried including cards with their products. 1988 prom-

ises more of the same. I'll guess that the Big 3 will repeat most of their issues of 1987 and add a few more rookie or star issues until we cry "uncle." The MLPAA seems to have an interest in licensing as many uses of their players' photos and names as the public can stand — and making sure all products are licensed. Small sets having gone from superstars to rookie stars will probably go to pre-rookie possible stars.

Type card collectors in 1988 will either continue going berserk trying to collect one of everything or more likely will just give up and learn that you can't collect everything — and shouldn't.

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