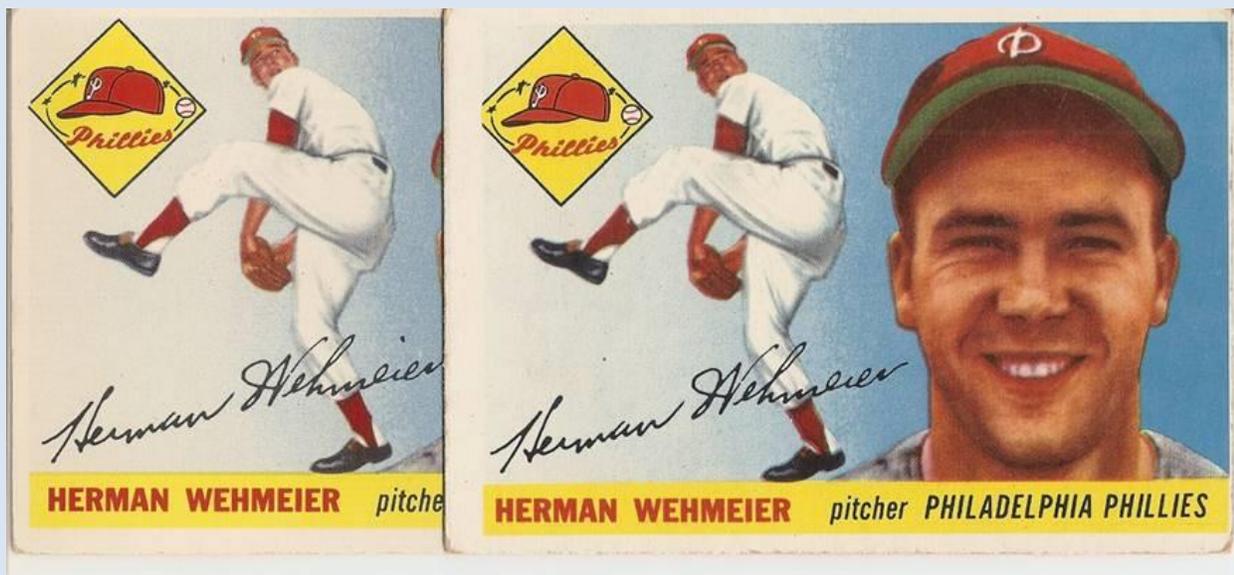


Hobby Odds and Ends

Variations, Coan, Berger, Burdick boxers and counting cards



The Wehmeier on the right, with a missing dot over the “i” in his signature and an asterisk next to his lifetime stats on the back, also has a logo on the front that is slightly cut off on the left side similar to the scarcer Jackie Robinson Dodgers logo.



By George Vrechek



Truncated logos

Bert Lehman’s story in the October 12, 2018, *SCD* got my attention. I thought it was pretty special that collector Larry Leonard had reported a variation involving a dot and an asterisk on the 1955 Herman Wehmeier card, the subject of my article in the same issue. However, Lehman’s story involved the discovery that some of the 1955 Jackie Robinson cards had Dodger logos cut off on the left side. Both variations have been in plain view since 1955, but never before reported.

Not to be outdone, Leonard reported that collector Tom Billing noticed an additional variation on the scarcer Wehmeier cards. Wehmeier’s Phillies logo was also slightly cut off on the left side. It appears to me that the entire setup on the Wehmeier “no dot” version moved about 1/16th of an inch to the left since the distance between the “H” in Herman is also closer to the left edge than on the more common card. The Robinson card seems to be off for the same reason; plus it is a little off on the top of the card as well. Everything on the images moved in relation to the borders. It is just more obvious on the logos.

Neither the Robinson nor Wehmeier variation was miscut. With two changes made on the Wehmeier card (the dot and the asterisk), you can understand why the entire setup moved around in the frame when Topps corrected the dot errors. You wonder why the Robinson card endured the same fate?

Similar slight cropping differences have been noted on many 1956 Topps cards, which I described as the “flat hat” versions in a July 26, 2013, *SCD* article. I guess it is time to look at the 1955 Topps a little closer. Could there be more incomplete logos (shifted setups) and missing dots? Keep in mind, variation collectors are easily excited, as evidenced by silly prices already being asked for the Robinson card.

Gil Coan, a super-senior player

Five years ago I wrote a few *SCD* articles about the oldest living players who had appeared on baseball or football cards. Many of the former players have gone on to the Field of Dreams, but one former player, featured in an October 2013 article, is still on the theoretical team of super-senior major leaguers who have appeared on baseball cards. As of October 2018, 96-year-old Coan was in the top 10 of the oldest living former players. I counted only three players who had appeared on cards and who were older than Coan – Wally Westlake, Eddie Robinson and John Hetki.



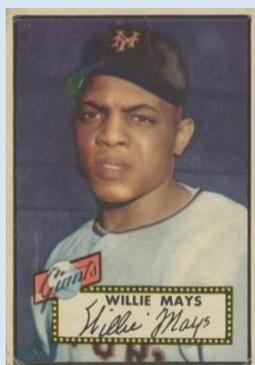
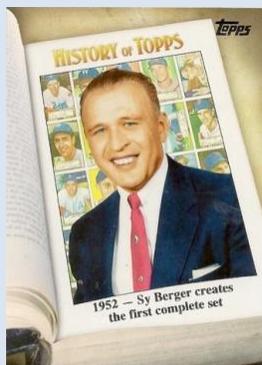
Super-seniors Coan, Robinson, Westlake and Hetki appeared in the 1953 Topps set.

I called Coan to see how he is doing. He and his wife, Dovie, still live in their home near the golf course in Brevard, North Carolina. They celebrated their 77th wedding anniversary recently. While he isn't feeding the cattle at his farm anymore and wasn't able to attend a recent alumni association gathering, he is still getting around and is always very cordial. As a long-time Brevard resident, he is well known. He said he was recognized at a restaurant recently by the father of one of the local players he had coached years ago. Coan said, "Eddie Robinson, who played first base, called him not long ago and we talked. He had a strong voice." Robinson and Coan were Washington teammates in 1949 and 1950. Robinson is a year and a half older than Coan.

Mrs. Sy Berger, doing fine

Thinking of super-seniors, I checked in with 95-year-old Gloria Berger, widow of the late Sy Berger of Topps. I also talked to Gloria's daughter, Maxine. Gloria is doing fine, still living in Rockville Center, New York, where she and Sy raised their three children. She said, "FaceTime is wonderful. With three great grandchildren in Austin, Texas, and one in Portland, Maine, we visit several times a week." She speaks energetically and with an upbeat attitude, not unlike that of Sy Berger who she first met in 1940 on a blind date set up by her best friend.

She mentioned that she still gets frequent contacts from their friends in baseball, including 87-year-old Willie Mays. In my 2008 interview with Sy Berger, Berger reminisced about first meeting Mays in the Giants clubhouse in 1951. Mays had started his career going 0 for 12 on the road. Berger was a 27-year-old marketing whiz kid for Topps who talked his way into the Giants clubhouse. On May 28, 1951, Mays homered in his first at bat at the Polo Grounds off Warren Spahn. Shortly thereafter, according to what Sy Berger told me, he inked his licensing contract with Topps.



Gloria said, "I am proud of what he (Sy) accomplished. I have lots of good memories."

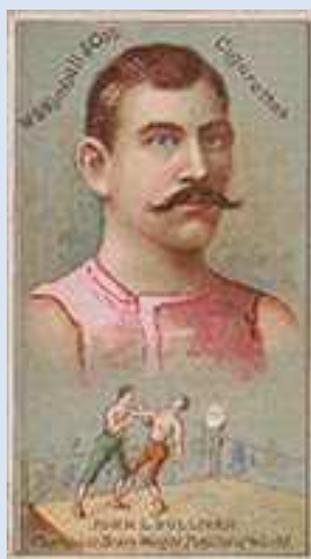
Sy Berger appeared on his own Topps card. Mays first appeared with Topps in 1952, thanks to Berger's initiative.

Burdick boxers at the Met

The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art recently concluded an exhibit - "On the Ropes: Vintage Boxing Cards from the Jefferson R. Burdick Collection." The exhibit included Burdick cards and other old prints and paintings depicting boxing from The Met's collections. Collector Geno Wagner visited The Met and had the following observation, "I would say that the biggest thing is that it's not just a display of cards, but a display of how iconic boxers were at the turn of the century. The prints and paintings make it all come together nicely. It's about half cards, half paintings/photos." The Met was happy to provide SCD with images of some of the items on display.



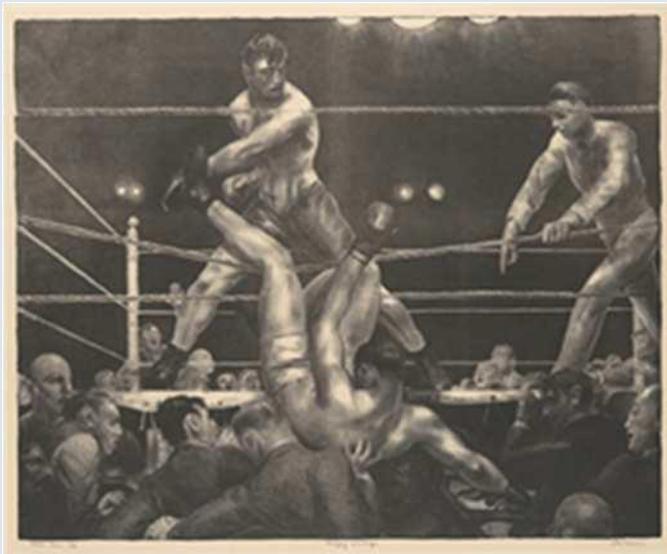
*John Hoppner. British, London 1758–1810 London
"Richard Humphreys, the Boxer Painting," Oil on canvas
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Alfred N.
Punnett Endowment Fund, 1953*



*John L. Sullivan, N184, The
Metropolitan Museum of Art, The
Jefferson R.
Burdick Collection, Gift of
Jefferson R. Burdick*

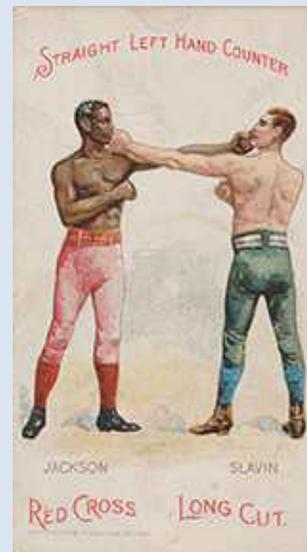


Burdick boxing exhibit hallway at The Met, photo Geno Wagner



*George Bellows. American, 1882–1925 New York
Bolton Brown. American, Dresden, New York
1864/65–1936 Woodstock, New York
“Dempsey and Firpo,” 1923–24
Lithograph, The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1925*

*Peter Jackson and Fred Slavin, N266, The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
The Jefferson R. Burdick Collection, Gift of Jefferson R. Burdick*





N28 The World's Champions included boxing cards displayed at The Met, photo Geno Wagner

Counting cards

I wrote a series of *SCD* articles in 2015 about expanding one's collecting horizons and collecting as much of the sport card universe as possible. I estimated that at least 160,000 sports cards were issued prior to 1981. Rather than focusing on having the highest graded sets, I suggested establishing goals based on the number of single, vintage sports collected. I felt that it would be quite an accomplishment to even collect half of the vintage cards produced. I proposed four recognition levels based on having between 35,000 and 50,000 cards, followed by levels of 50,000 to 65,000, 65,000 to 80,000, and 80,000 cards and beyond. Only pre-1981 single sports cards counted; variations didn't count.

My own collection was about halfway through the first level and my goal was to get to level 2 - 50,000 cards. I recently achieved my goal, but it wasn't easy. I felt that it got harder the closer you got to 50,000 cards. After you get through the popular large sets, there isn't much in the way of low-hanging fruit. You need to expand into sets like Parkhursts, disc sets, Frostade, Nu-Cards, Canadian exhibits, Atlantic Oil and a myriad of Topps inserts. There is only one collector I know who has reported getting close to the 80,000 card level. But we all keep looking.

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