



# Sports

by Jerry Keys

## Card Collecting Part VII, 1952

Beginning in May 2007, I have touched on groups of years Topps has produced baseball cards. This month will conclude the series covering Topps baseball cards. Although Topps produced cards in 1951, the 1952 set is considered by hobbyists as the "Holy Grail" of baseball cards post-World War Two. The set does not have the muscle of the 1930's Goudey sets or the T206 cards of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The 1952 Topps set consisted of 407 cards (very large for that time).

The first 80 cards were printed with multi-colored backs (red or black). With the exception of a few, each colored back card is priced the same. From card numbers 81 to 310, the prices are scaled as most other sets, stars at the highest price, semi-stars at a mid-high price and commons at the lowest.

One key error in the set was #48 and #49, #48 Joe Page's bio was placed on card #49 John Sain and Sain's on #48. There is one noticeable difference in price of the red and black backs. Card #1 Andy Pafko's black back is priced at \$5000 and red at \$6000. The reason Pafko's card is more expensive than stars such as Warren Spahn,

Duke Snider or Gil Hodges is it was the #1 card in the set and in those days kids would rubber band their cards together in numerical order very tight (same rea-

son #407 is quite expensive).

The pricing of the 1952 set was modest until the rise of baseball cards in the early 1980's. The set priced at \$10,500 in 1983. Ten



**Roberto Alomar: Best 2B of his generation, Hall-bound in 2010?**



**1952 Topps #407 Eddie Mathews**

years later it was priced at \$75,000. The main reason behind the sharp increase is the awareness of the limited supply of cards produced. Cards 311-407 are premium priced due to scarcity. It so happens there were rookie cards and 1<sup>st</sup> run Topps cards of several

baseball immortals in the high number series. The first card of the high series is #311 Mickey Mantle (this card was a double print as was 312 Jackie

Robinson and 313 Bobby Thompson). The Mantle card was valued at \$1550 in 1983 and ten years later, \$20,000. Today the set is priced at \$65,000 (master set \$80,000, defined as 487 cards, both the red and black backs of the first 80 cards).

Other cards of note that appeared in the high series were one of my favorites, Hoyt Wilhelm. He was a knuckleball specialist; it was his rookie card, in the high series, and a HoF'er. This card is currently valued at \$1000 and quite out of my reach. Mantle's

#311 is priced at \$30,000 today and if professionally graded, and in NM condition or better can easily fetch six-figures in the open market. The last card in the set holds the same standards as the first card, and if by chance the first or last card ends up being a star, further enhances the price. The distinction of #407 goes to HoF'er Eddie Mathews. Card 407 is priced at \$10,000 and is second only to the 311 Mantle. Mathews enjoyed a stellar career but part of the pricing behind the card is due to it being the last in the set.

Over the last ten years, most collectors have sent their 1952 Topps cards in to be graded. A same con-

dition card graded tends to bring 2-3 times the price an un-graded card would bring of the same player. Some collectors only seek out cards 1-310 and call those "their" set because the remaining cards are extremely expensive. A common card from 311-407 is \$250.

The 1952 set is out of reach of 99% of card collectors. Any card from the set graded high (7 or higher) or un-graded in NM or better condition commands a hefty price. Maybe younger collectors could seek out a card of their granddad's favorite players in less than NM condition. A card even in the high series can be obtained at a relatively low price if the corners of the card show a good deal of wear.

The 2010 baseball Hall of Fame voting will be interesting. As we learned with Jim Rice this year, you can be a legitimate HoF'er but

question a number of baseball purists asked. There is something special in being elected on your 1<sup>st</sup> time around but after that, is there really a big difference?



**1952 Topps #311 Mickey Mantle**

Is a 6<sup>th</sup> ballot HoF'er a better all-around player than an 11<sup>th</sup> ballot HoF'er? When a player the caliber of Tommy John is not given the needed number of votes to be elected, it can be very

lots, it will be enjoyable to see how many fall short year after year. The morbid side of this Era is how many players who did not juice will be denied a place in Cooperstown.

This year is Fred McGriff's 1<sup>st</sup> year of eligibility. Had he played ten years earlier he would be a 1<sup>st</sup> ballot "lock" for the Hall with 493 HR's. Unfortunately, he enjoyed his prime during the rise of steroids. 400 homers was once the benchmark for Hall election. That is no longer the case. With Mark McGwire hovering around 25% in voting,

500 or 600 homers are no longer a guaranteed benchmark. When Barry Bonds becomes eligible, will he be shunned as well or be elected on the 1<sup>st</sup> ballot?

Because hitting standards are being criticized, will pitching standards be lowered? It used to be 300 wins or 3000 strikeouts were the Hall standard. Mike Mussina retired after the 2008 season with 270 wins. Will he be admitted even though he fell short on both benchmarks and had a relatively high ERA?

Dawson and Blyleven are long overdue for Cooperstown. The only 1<sup>st</sup> year eligible player who has a strong chance is Roberto Alomar (2724 hits, .300 average). Newcomers McGriff, Barry Larkin, Edgar Martinez, and Andres Galarraga should receive a great deal of consideration. Holdovers from last year who should garnish a



**Andre Dawson: The Hawk should be Hall-bound in 2010**

great deal of votes but not enough to be elected are Lee Smith, Jack Morris, Harold Baines, Tim Lincecum, and Alan Trammell.

possible for Andre Dawson or Bert Blyleven to be shunned as well. With the Steroid Era sluggers beginning to appear on the bal-

be blown off for fourteen years and finally be enshrined your final year on the ballot. Why he had to wait for so many years is a