



## Sports

by Jerry Keys

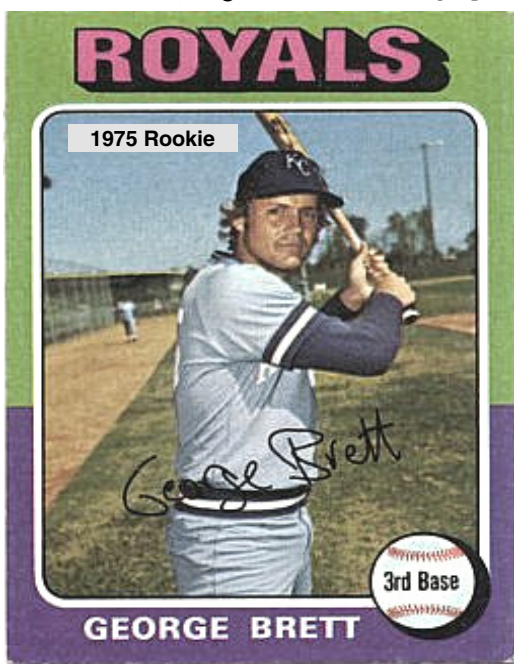
In the fifth installment of card collecting, part five looks at the years of 1974 to 1980. Some traditionalists look at these years as the last of the golden years, where Topps was king and cards were not produced in mass quantity (due to competition). Others view it as a bleak time in collecting; when Topps was the only legitimate choice collectors had to choose from. There were other small brands available but most were regional issues and team issued sets.

1974 was the first year Topps produced cards in one series. Previously, cards were released in series. 1974 also brought the first "traded set," an extension of the parent set. This set contained 660 cards (as did 1975, 1976, 1977). The traded set consisted of 43 player cards and one unnumbered checklist. Each card was the same number as it was in the parent set and was affixed with a "T" after the number (Ron Santo was #270 in regular set and #270T in the traded set). The trade card showed Ron with the team he was traded to during the off-season. This was a brilliant idea on the part of Topps because numerous players were traded during the off-season.

The 1974 set was unique in two ways. It was the first set offered in factory form. It was available for order through a J.C. Penny catalog. One can only hypothesize sales were poor because factory sets were not offered for several years to come. A set in factory form lists at \$600 but has been known to reach \$800 due to scarcity and the hand-made set lists at \$400. The other unique quirk of the 1974 set is Topps anticipated the San Diego Padres to move to Washington. Of course that never came to be but Topps produced fifteen cards with their new destination, Washington. These

cards are quite scarce and bring roughly four times the value of the Padres card.

The first six cards in the set are devoted to the soon-to-be home run king (and still is in my book), Hank Aaron, and similar to most sets in this block (1974-80) offers record breakers, league leader cards



(AL and NL leader), cards depicting post-season action, team leaders (cards containing pictures of the manager and coaches of each team), rookie prospects (by position, four players on each prospect card), and All-Star cards. The All-Star cards depicted each position with the AL and NL representative on each card.

A growing trend concerning cards from the 1970's is nicer cards are beginning to bring significantly more on the market. The list price for a 1974 set (without the traded cards) in near mint or better condition is known to bring \$500-\$700. A set in EX-MT condition (most commonly seen) should cost you around \$225 and a set that shows wear over the years can be gotten for \$75. The older the card is, the harder it is to find in superb condition. The trade set lists at \$20 and is sometimes offered as a combo with the parent set. Key rookie cards in the 1974 set are Dave Winfield, Dave Parker, Ken Griffey, Bill Madlock, Frank Tanana, and Frank White.

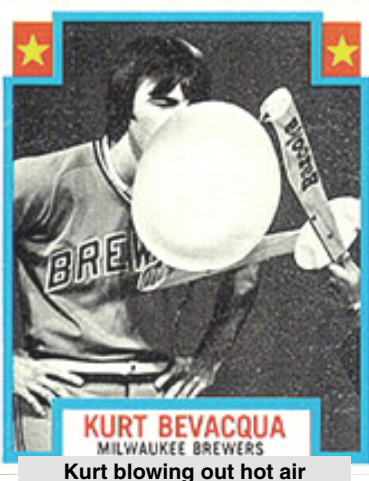
The 1975 set is very popular due to the colorful designs

on the card. A few differences are the offering of record breaker cards (a mainstay of Topps but was dismissed in '74 to pay tribute to Aaron), special cards commemorating the past MVP's of each league from 1951-1974 (the AL and NL MVP are both affixed on the front of the card for each specific year), team photos with manager photo in corner (this was continued through 1981), and placing a special insignia on each card of a player denoted as an "All-Star" (Topps dropped the All-Star card until 1982 and gave accomplishment on the player's regular issued card).

The 1975 set lists at \$600 and in near mint or better condition can easily bring \$750 to \$1,000. An EX-MT set still commands around \$400 and even a set with wear garnishes \$150. The set is famous for its huge lot of star rookie cards, the two most notable Robin Yount and George Brett. Other star rookies include Gary Carter, Jim Rice, Fed Lynn, Keith Hernandez, and Doug DeCinces.

1976 offers another traded set (numbered exactly like the 1974) and three special

### 1975 JOE GARAGIOLA/BAZOOKA BUBBLE GUM BLOWING CHAMP



card(s). Other than the regularly issued topical cards, 1976 offers a five card father and son section (where then current players made the big leagues just as their fathers

did,) a ten card All-Time All-Stars set (offering collectors low-cost cards of immortals Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Lou Gehrig, just to name a few), and a card of Kurt Bevacqua being denoted as the "bubble gum bubble blowing champion".

The 1976 set lists at a very modest \$300 and in near mint or better condition will bring \$400-500, EX-MT \$175, and with wear \$100. The traded set lists at \$30 and is also usually included in the sale of the parent set. Key rookie cards from this set are Dennis Eckersley, Willie Randolph, Ron Guidry, Kent Tekulve, and John Candilaria.

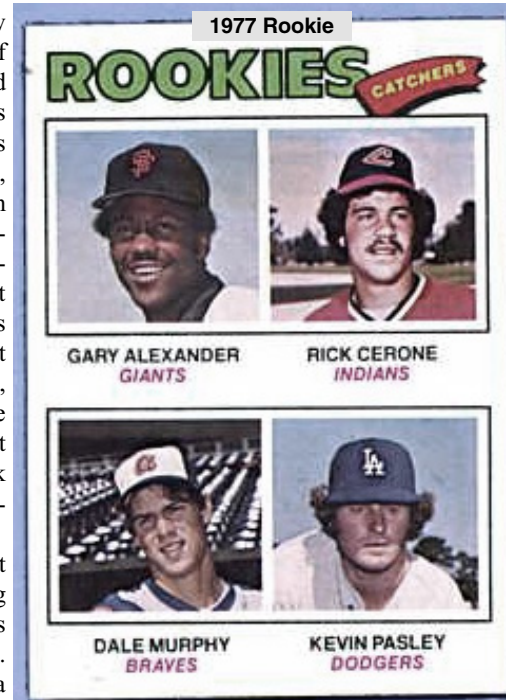
1977 offered two new single run sections of the set, a four-card brothers issue (brothers in majors, most famous is the Brett brothers), and a five-card Turn Back the Clock set denoting past famous accomplishments. The set lists at \$250 and brings \$300 to \$400 near mint or better, \$150 EX-MT, and with wear \$75. The key rookies from the set are Andre Dawson, Jack Clark, and Dale Murphy.

The 1978 Topps set brought something fairly new to Topps cards, the double print. Topps made cards on a 132-card sheet. The

1973 to 1977 sets consisted of 660 cards (132 x 5), while the 1978 offered 726 cards (as will the 1979, 1980, 1981). 66 cards were double printed; in essence lowering the value of the cards. Luckily the DP tag did not include most of the major stars of the day. The set lists at \$225 and near mint or better brings \$275 to \$350, EX-MT \$150, and with wear \$75. Key rookie cards from the set are Paul Molitor and Alan Trammell (both players are on a four-player prospect card), Jack Morris, Eddie Murray, Lou Whitaker, Lance Parrish, and Mike Easler.

The 1979 set is commonly termed the "DP set" as a large number of current superstars were double printed

(lowering this year's value enough to make later cards more valuable than this year's). There was one special made group of cards in the set, an All-Time Leaders card featuring lifetime leaders in major statistical categories (allowing immortals such as Cobb, Cy Young, and Walter Johnson to name a few, to be produced), and prospects to no longer be four-player cards by position but as three-player cards issue for each team. The 1979 set lists at \$175 and near mint or better commands \$250 to \$300, EX-MT \$100, and with wear \$60. Key rookies from



this set are Ozzie Smith, Carney Lansford, Willie Wilson, Lonnie Smith, and Terry Kennedy.

The 1980 set is termed as the "dead set". Although similar to the 1979 set where one superstar rookie carries the set in value, the 1980 superstar rookie, Rickey Henderson, first carried and then dropped the set. The set once listed at \$350 (take into consideration this was also during the inflated price era where the following sets listed in near mint condition as follows: 1975 \$900, 1976 \$450, 1977 \$450, 1978 \$350, 1979 \$275). There were no specialty cards made exclusively for this set. Outside of Henderson, major rookies were Dan Quisenberry, Dave Stieb, Rick Sutcliffe, Dickie Thon, Larry Andersen, Mike Morgan (the Traveling Mansee 2002 article on Mike),

and on one card Mike Scott and Jesse Orosco. From 1974 to 1980 Topps did produce a few note-worthy subsets. Each year Topps produced a team checklist sheet (where each card was not cut out singularly) and was available for one Topps pack wrapper and around 50 cents. 1977 introduced a cloth set of 73 cards and lists at \$150, 1978 a Zest set for \$8, a comic card set for 1979 at \$20, and an oversize 1980 Super set for \$20.

In 1975 Topps produced a "mini-set", an exact duplicate of the regular set but at a smaller size. The mini set pricing falls in with the regular sets pricing except it commands around 1.5 list value (if regular set is \$600, the mini set would be at \$900). And 1974 came out with five major subsets, ranging from the team checklists (contains all the players signatures only, \$25), to the Stamps and Stamp Albums (\$150 each), to the 12-card Puzzle (\$1800) and Deckle Edge (72-card, \$5000).

As you can see, once you collect back past the 1980's the cards get much more scarce and much more expensive, depending upon condition. If you are a collector and would just want the cards no matter what condition, prices are still affordable. If you are seeking top of the line condition cards, be prepared to pay a "nice penny" for them. If the prices are too steep and you still want cards in very sharp condition, consider collecting only your favorite team or possibly your favorite players from yesteryear. Even if your favorite player was Nolan Ryan, collecting only his cards is not that expensive in these years. Look for part six 1953-1973 this summer and the reason why what series a card came out in sometimes dictated the price of the card more so than the player's performance.