

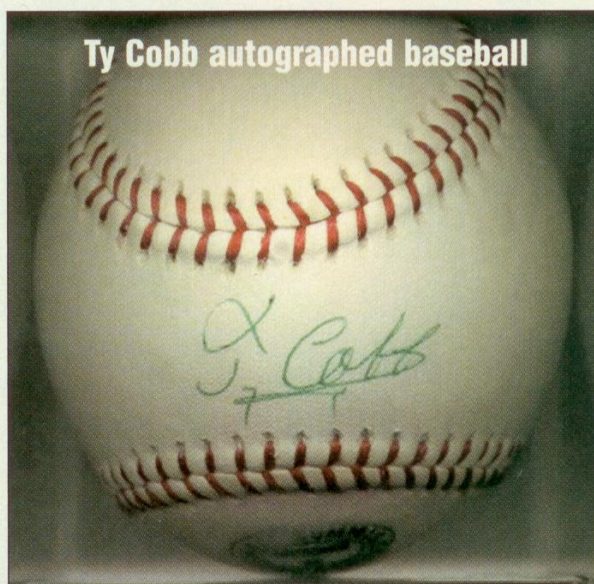
Bean Bags and Baseball: Heroes and Superstars

Collecting and professional baseball have been linked for years, but few know just how deep the relationship runs.

By Jacqueline Greenwood

The simplicity of shape, the carefully placed, flawless stitching. The perfect use of color to complement form. For sports fans, this could be the description of a baseball's simple, yet functional design. For collectors, it could be describing the painstakingly crafted Beanie Babies®. Who would have thought that baseball and bean bag collecting would become so intertwined?

One man has a background in both diversions. Beanie Baby creator Ty Warner was named after his father's baseball hero, Ty Cobb. But this Ty has attracted more fans with his creation of Beanies than most baseball players attract hitting home runs.



Ty is considered a celebrity to millions of Beanie enthusiasts around the world. He is the creative genius behind the company that earns more money than Hasbro and Mattel combined. Baseball fans have been known to pay enormous amounts of money for something used or worn by a famous player. Now Beanie fans get the chance to own something touched by the one they worship.

Nothing compares to the record-breaking Mark McGwire 70th home run ball that sold for \$2.7 million earlier this year. But prices paid for autographed Beanies and cards can be compared to the prices paid for

autographed balls, bats and rookie cards from such baseball greats as Ty Cobb, Nolan Ryan, Babe Ruth and "Big Mac" McGwire. The Beanie cards compare favorably.

To date, Ty's signature can be found on the hang tags of two employee-exclusive Beanie Babies, the #1 Bear® and the Billionaire Bear®, and on Beanie Babies Official Club Collector's Cards®. There are only 253 #1 Bears in the world, and these are the only Beanie Babies with a limited edition numbering printed on the inside of the hang tag. Collectors are paying in excess of \$10,000 to own one of the rarest Beanies ever produced. It's difficult to find a baseball card that can compare in price to this limited-edition Beanie.

"A collector could obtain an autographed Babe Ruth ball or even an autographed Mark McGwire baseball bat for under the five-figure amount currently being paid for the #1 Bear Beanie Baby," said Jake White of SportCards Plus, a dealer specializing in sports rarities in Laguna Niguel, California.

Beanie fans also pay thousands of dollars to own one of the 600 signed Billionaire Bears in existence. Early in May on the eBay auction site, a Billionaire Bear sold for \$3,000 and a baseball autographed by Ty Cobb sold for \$3,500. Ty Cobb was among the first players inducted into the Hall of Fame.

"What made him such a superb player was his unparalleled desire to achieve, to excel, and above all, to win," said one collector in a recent eBay auction. Characteristics one could also use to describe Ty Warner.

Searching for the Ultimate Card

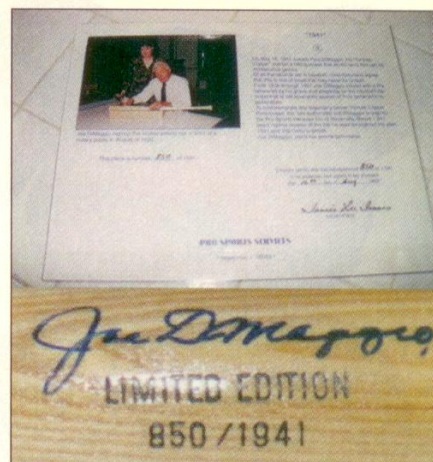
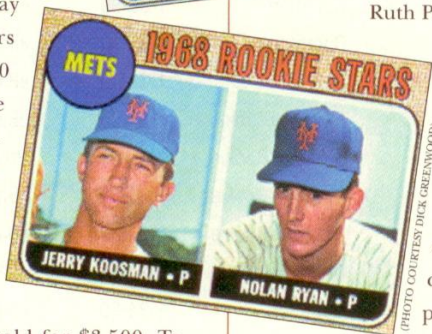
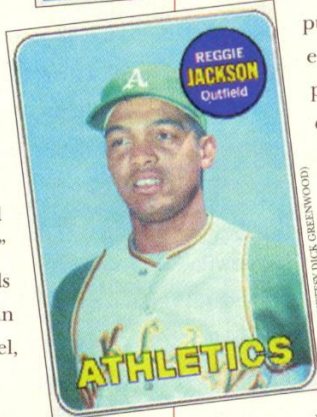
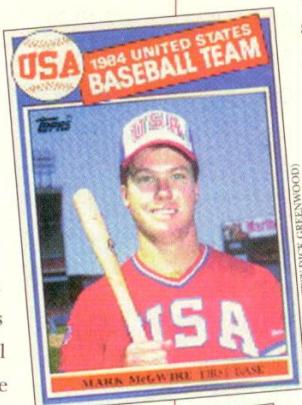
Collectors looking for that special autographed 1/1 will need to look at Beanie trading cards. Ty has signed only one of every type of collector's card produced for a total of 600 autographed cards. Though all autographed cards are numbered 1/1 (thus making them all equally scarce,) the rarity of the Beanie Baby® pictured on the collector's card greatly influences its market value.

Bhanu Patel, owner of Center Gifts & Collectibles in Walpole, Massachusetts, purchased the autographed gold #1 Bear card from Series II for \$13,900. Patel bought this card from one of his customers, Bill Harrop, who found the card in a box he had purchased from Patel's store in early April. This is the highest price paid for an autographed card known to date and is considered the ultimate of all autographed Beanie cards.

The hot new trend in the baseball trading card category are cards that contain pieces of a used bat and/or jersey along with a numbered autograph.

A 1999 Upper Deck Babe Ruth Piece of History card which contained a piece of a bat and Ruth's signature numbered 2/3 sold for \$10,100 in April on eBay. Baseball card experts have yet to identify an autographed baseball card that exceeds the price paid for the autographed gold #1 Bear card.

Until recently, autographed baseball cards were not considered as desirable as an autographed bat or ball. Many felt that once a baseball card was signed it was defaced and therefore it was priced in the same category as an autographed photo. The highest price ever paid for a baseball card not containing an



**Joe DiMaggio
limited edition autographed
baseball bat, with picture of
him signing it with
the letter of authenticity.**

**Pictured left (from top to bottom) are:
Mark McGwire Rookie Card
Reggie Jackson Rookie Card
Nolan Ryan Rookie Card**

autograph was a T206 Honus Wagner baseball card that sold for \$640,500 in 1996 at a Christie's auction.

"With the exception of the Honus Wagner baseball card, the most valuable card is a 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle card currently valued at \$20,000," says Tracy Hackler, managing editor of *Beckett's Baseball Card Monthly*.

The Beanie Craze Continues

There is no doubt Beanie fans are just as wild about Ty collectibles as baseball fans are about baseball.

"Those caught up in the Beanie craze are no different than those involved in baseball cards," explains Hackler. "We are completist by nature. Beanie collectors find enjoyment and fulfillment from completing their collection."

Since only one official Beanie trading card product is currently on the market, there are no decisions to make about which product to buy if you are a Beanie collector. The opposite is true for baseball card collectors. The largest producer of trading cards is the New ➤



#1 Bear®

York City-based Topps Company. They produce trading cards for four major sports including hockey, baseball, basketball and football.

"We produce 15 different products per year for each sport," said Marty Appel, spokesperson for the Topps Company.

Other companies that produce baseball cards include Upper Deck, Fleer and Pacific Trading Cards. Prices range from \$.99 for a pack of Topps Opening Day trading cards to as much as \$17 for a pack of "Sports Illustrated Greats of the Game," according to Steve Kempf from B&C Collectibles in Westport, Connecticut.

With all these different products to choose from, the decision about what product to buy can be quite confusing to an inexperienced card collector.

Though baseball card companies don't release exact production figures, industry experts confirm that

39 Autographed Cards Sold ~ Series I

Card	Type	Date	Sold	Price
Gold Splash	Original 9	1-30-99	eBay	\$3,550
Gold Patti	Original 9	1-24-99	eBay	\$3,550
Gold Valentino	Birthday/Rookie	2-1-99	eBay	\$2,499
Blue Chocolate	Original 9	2-19-99	eBay	\$2,251
Blue Slither	Retired	2-28-99	eBay	\$2,225
Teddy the Magenta Bear	Common	2-3-99	Privately	\$2,200
Waves	Common	3-15-99	eBay	\$2,180
Blue Chilly	Retired	3-22-99	eBay	\$2,000
Spunky	Common	3-13-99	eBay	\$2,000
Gold Bessie	Birthday/Rookie	3-28-99	eBay	\$1,999
Red Crunch	Birthday/Rookie	3-17-99	eBay	\$1,929.03
Gold Fetch	Birthday/Rookie	2-15-99	eBay	\$1,913.88
Silver Bubbles	Birthday/Rookie	2-21-99	eBay	\$1,776
Red Patti	Original 9	2-5-99	eBay	\$1,676.00
Teddy the Teal Bear	Common	2-9-99	eBay	\$1,653.55
Derby	Common	2-28-99	eBay	\$1,627.77
Gold Strut	Birthday/Rookie	2-8-99	eBay	\$1,600.05
Pugsley	Common	2-22-99	eBay	\$1,600
Red Flash	Original 9	1-31-99	eBay	\$1,585
Red Lefty	Retired	2-8-99	eBay	\$1,575
Red Tabasco	Birthday/Rookie	2-8-99	eBay	\$1,552.75
Tank	Common	2-15-99	eBay	\$1,550.77
Red Splash	Original 9	1-28-99	eBay	\$1,525.05
Gold Pinchers	Original 9	1-12-99	eBay	\$1,501.65
Teddy the Jade Bear	Common	1-30-99	eBay	\$1,501
Sparky	Common	4-3-99	eBay	\$1,150
Silver bronty	Retired	1-11-99	eBay	\$1,500
Silver Bessie	Birthday/Rookie	1-25-99	eBay	\$1,485
Blue Kiwi	Birthday/Rookie	1-10-99	Privately	\$1,375
Blue Radar	Birthday/Rookie	1-30-99	eBay	\$1,351
Gold Lizzy	Birthday/Rookie	11-18-99	eBay	\$1,275
Iggy	Common	2-14-99	eBay	\$1,025
Claude	Common	1-24-99	eBay	\$1,000.01
Blue Mel	Birthday/Rookie	1-16-99	eBay	\$1,000
Silver Lizzy	Birthday/Rookie	1-9-99	eBay	\$860
Early	Common	1-10-99	eBay	\$820.00
Red Princess	Birthday/Rookie	2-14-99	eBay	\$810
Blue Glory	Birthday/Rookie	12-4-98	eBay	\$722
Libearty	Common	1-24-99	eBay	\$700.00

19 Autographed Cards Sold ~ Series II

Card	Type	Date	Sold	Price
Gold #1 Bear	Rare Bear	5-1-99	Privately	\$13,900
Gold Britannia	Rare Bear	5-1-99	Privately	\$4,900
Blue Valentino	Rare Bear	6-21-99	eBay	\$1,978
Silver Caw	Rare bear	6-19-98	eBay	\$1,978
Teddy the teal bear	Common	5-9-99	Privately	\$1,625
Green Snort	Retired	5-27-99	Privately	\$1,500
Lefty	Common	4-11-99	eBay	\$1,450
Zip the black cat	Common	4-3-99	eBay	\$1,276
Blue Lucky	Retired	4-17-99	eBay	\$1,026
Quackers	Common	5-5-99	eBay	\$1,025
Blue Rover	Birthday/Rookie	5-13-99	eBay	\$1,000
Spot without a spot	Common	4-29-99	eBay	\$1,000
Silver Fleece	Birthday/Rookie	4-29-99	eBay	\$1,000
Luke	Common	4-26-99	eBay	\$1,000
Kicks	Common	6-12-99	eBay	\$1,000
Silver Lucky	Retired	5-11-99	eBay	\$910
Green Hissy	Birthday/Rookie	4-20-99	eBay	\$890
Kicks	Common	5-3-99	eBay	\$761
Lucky	Retired	5-4-99	eBay	\$560



Billionaire Bear®

perhaps only 7-9,000 cases of a specific product are produced. Compare this to the estimated production run of almost 100,000 cases of Series II Beanie Babies Collector's Cards®, and it is obvious just how big Ty has scored in the trading card business. Even with these huge production numbers, retailers still cannot keep Beanie cards in stock for more than a few days. Prices have climbed at retail from \$2 per pack to more than \$3 per pack.

To demonstrate the popularity of the Beanie trading card market, here are some examples of baseball and Beanie cards that were sold on eBay this past spring. It is apparent that many collectors are betting that Beanies will continue to be a part of our lives just as baseball continues to define American culture. ♥

A Numbers Game

A 1999 Ovation, Mickey Mantle Game used bat card sold for \$1,025 on April 30, 1999 (300 cards made.)

A 1968 Nolan Ryan Topps Rookie Card sold on for \$1,000 on May 10, 1999.

A 1969 Reggie Jackson Rookie Card sold for \$225 on May 11, 1999 on eBay.

A 1984 Tops Mark McGwire Rookie Card sold for \$150 on May 10, 1999.

1999 Topps Finest Mark McGwire Gold Refractor, card #70, serial #54/100 sold for \$125.09 on May 1, 1999.

A Series I gold Peanut® card sold for \$1,036.22 on May 12, 1999. (150 cards made)

A Series II autographed Quackers® cards sold for \$1,025 on May 5, 1999.

A Series II Silver Billionaire® Card sold for \$200 on May 9, 1999.

A Series I Silver Tabasco card sold for \$149.99 on May 1, 1999.

A Series II Silver Rex® card sold for \$118.50 on May 10, 1999. ♥