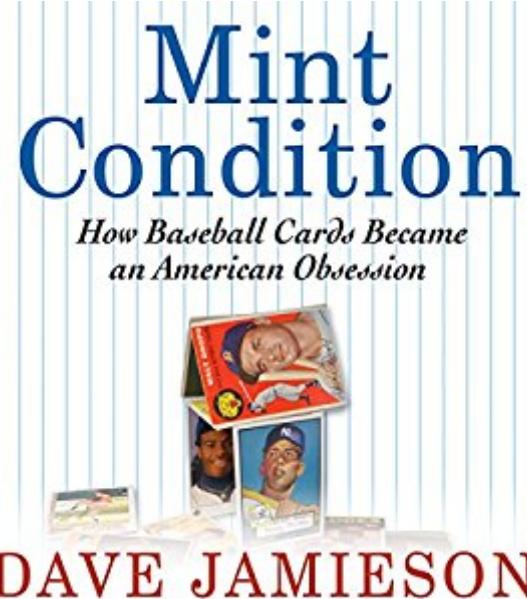


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# Mint Condition: How Baseball Cards Became An American Obsession



## Synopsis

When award-winning journalist Dave Jamieson's parents sold his childhood home a few years ago, he rediscovered a prized boyhood possession: his baseball card collection. Now was the time to cash in on the investments of his youth. But all the card shops had closed, and cards were selling for next to nothing online. What had happened? In *Mint Condition*, his fascinating, eye-opening, endlessly entertaining book, Jamieson finds the answer by tracing the complete story of this beloved piece of American childhood. Picture cards had long been used for advertising, but after the Civil War, tobacco companies started slipping them into cigarette packs as collector's items. Before long the cards were wagging the cigarettes. In the 1930s cards helped gum and candy makers survive the Great Depression. In the 1960s royalties from cards helped transform the baseball players' association into one of the country's most powerful unions, dramatically altering the game. In the '80s and '90s, cards went through a spectacular bubble, becoming a billion-dollar-a-year industry before all but disappearing, surviving today as the rarified preserve of adult collectors. *Mint Condition* is charming original history brimming with colorful characters, sure to delight baseball fans and collectors.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What a well-researched and nicely-written book. I've been collecting baseball cards since the 1970s, and I learned a lot reading this page-turner. I'd recommend it for anyone who's interested in the hobby. Interestingly, the author comes to the same conclusion I reached about the baseball card

industry over a decade ago: It needs to go back to the way it was, with fewer sets, fewer "insert" cards and cheaper prices. And bring back the bubble gum and cardboard.

Wow - if you want to be schooled in the history of baseball/trading cards from their inception: tobacco cards, Cracker Jack cards, bubble gum cards, etc., this book will have you mesmerized! The history of cards is well described in chronological order so it's provides a smooth transition from one generation to the next from vintage cards through the "Junk Wax" era to the modern day! We highly recommend you read "Mint Condition" if you enjoy the hobby and/or collect baseball cards in general. This book will not disappoint you!

This is a wonderful book on many different levels. I was surprised to learn that baseball cards have been in existence since the 1860s. The book explores, in a very entertaining way, the marketing of cigarettes and gum by packaging them with collectible cards; images of baseball players being by far the most popular. The author also tells fascinating stories of the men who significantly contributed to the hobby: the entrepreneurs, the collectors, the creative teams and in later years the speculators. The story of how one company became a long running monopoly in the industry and how that monopoly was broken by the head of the baseball player's union was engrossing. The chapter on a contemporary baseball card dealer who warns buyers about doctored cards, can be read in a new light, since he recently admitted to trimming the sides of the world's most famous and valuable baseball card.

I, like the author, jumped into the card-collecting craze in the 80s and 90s (the junk wax era of cards). And I was hoping that my card collection would become valuable for me in the future. However, years later, I was shocked when it was revealed to me that my collection was virtually worthless. And this book finally explained to me just why this happened. This book was fun, easy to read, and very entertaining.

For me the most interesting thing was, that Mr. Boris Korbel is mentioned there as an entrepreneur in Upper Deck company, his father Josef came from the Czech Republic, where he managed Salvation Army activities until the communist coup in 1948. Boris Korbel made billions of dollars in California and came back to the Czech Republic in 1992, where he bought the most prominent soccer team Slavia, which he generously funded. The whole world is a global village !

Nostalgic glory days of bubble gum card fifties. My mom didn't throw mine out but I sold them too soon when I figured they were just guys in uniforms. My bad.

This book sat on my wish list for months. I delayed purchasing it because while I loved collecting baseball cards as a kid I figured there was no way an entire book about baseball cards could be enjoyable. I was dead wrong. While the idea of baseball card history sounds rather dull, Jameison makes it humorous, entertaining, and insightful. He does so by displaying the historical import of certain card sets (arguing, for example, that cigarettes owe their American success to baseball cards), interviewing those who played key roles in the creative and business growth of baseball cards, and giving us an up-close look at the most eccentric collectors and dealers. He writes as one who, like me, loved the hobby of collecting and trading cards as a child in the 80's -- only to eventually give up on the hobby when baseball cards became so expensive and overproduced that children could no longer participate in the same way. As such, I felt as if he was investigating on my behalf and speaking on my behalf throughout. That said, if you enjoy quirky American history, business case studies, or interesting characters you should find the book a quick and fun read. Even if you were not a card-collecting child in the 80's. [...]

I'm about the same age as the author. I know exactly what it was like to spend every dime I had on baseball cards in 1989-1991. A subscription to Beckett was sacred. Every bus ride to school, and back home, we were making card deals as if we were traders on Wall Street. I could only dream of owning a 1984 Donruss Mattingly or a 1982 Topps Ripken. What a shock it was to see what happened to baseball card collecting when I came back to it in my late 20's. If you're like me, you will love this book.

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