



DISPLAYING A FEW cards of their baseball card collections are these fifth graders from Franklin school. From left are Jim Dillingham, Jerry Brewster and Gary Diehl. Hundreds of Salina youths collect baseball cards. (JOURNAL PHOTO)

Baseball Card Collections Reaching Peak Once Again

By Bill Burke

Their home, age, height, weight, batting average, fielding average, record-smashing home run travel or pitching record since entering the other day? How many walks did Bob Cain of the St. Louis Browns issue last year?

And on each card there's a "Dugout Quiz", which answers most questions any baseball fan would ask.

The cards, five to a package in the new Joe DiMaggio series, or five to a package in another set, come with a piece of bubble gum and sell for 5c.

Needless to say, the gum is secondary to the cards.

The baseball cards have become a booming business that merchants are having a hard time keeping them in stock.

Once the word gets around that a new box of gum hits the store shelves, the merchant is soon deluged by would-be purchasers.

If the youths are veteran collectors, they don't often get new players when buying a package.

Then comes the time the youths begin to swap. And they learn to trade the valuable cards like a veteran major league owner.

The big trades will find Mickey Mantle of the Yanks being swapped for three, four and sometimes five less known players. Often such stars as Mantle are pawned off in trades that would make managers shudder should the same trade take place in the major leagues.

In Salina the most popular cards, without saying, are Salina's in the big leagues, Bob Swift of Detroit, Bob Cain of St. Louis Brown's or Bubba Church, the ex-Blue Jay hurler now with Cincinnati's Redlegs.

The baseball card companies do a million dollar business about this time of the year as thousands upon thousands of youths collect a complete series.

And baseball benefits. Every new collector means a baseball fan is in the making.

Take a boy to the ball park in the major leagues this summer. Don't buy a program.

Chances are he'll quickly point out every player in the game after studying his cards in his own home.

Recently at the New York Giants-Cleveland Indians exhibition game in Wichita we arrived too late to get a program.

But each of the players, and his history, was completely explained by a nephew who collects the cards.

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