

NEW: 1969 SEASON BASEBALL CARDS!

From the Ridiculous to the Sublime at Shea Stadium The Controversy and Infamy of *Ball Four*

The New York team added to the big leagues by expansion in 1962 became famous almost immediately for its ineptitude. The club never finished higher than ninth during its first seven years in the league, and its masochistically loyal fans expected more of the same in 1969. Some strong young arms on the pitching staff did provide a bit more reason for optimism than in previous years, but an optimistic New York fan thought in terms of eighth place.

So when the team cruised by a collapsing Chicago team in the stretch to win the Eastern Division rather handily, its followers could hardly believe their good fortune. Surely it couldn't possibly last. But it did. The light-hitting outfit which had relied on pitching all year long suddenly exploded for 27 runs and swept Atlanta in the playoffs. Staff mainstays Tom Seaver and Jerry Koosman were both hit hard, and New York still won three straight. 1969 was, by the way, the first year the leagues were separated into divisions.

A heavily-favored and beautifully-balanced Baltimore team constituted the opposition in the Series, but by now the "Amazin's" seemed certain they couldn't lose. Actually, they did, 4-1, in the first game, but that was the only time. They then whipped (although some Baltimore fans might claim that "lucked out" would be more accurate — the New Yorkers did get every imaginable break, particularly from the umpiring crew, throughout the Series) the Birds in four consecutive games, with such unlikely heroes as Al Weis, Ron Swoboda and a terribly wild 22-year-old reliever named Nolan Ryan.

Seaver and Koosman pitched brilliantly this time around, Tommie Agee saved Game 3 with two spectacular catches, and mid-season acquisition Donn Clendenon unloaded three homers. An outstanding Baltimore team including Frank and Brooks Robinson, Boog Powell, Mike Cuellar, Dave McNally and Jim Palmer would have to wait another year for its world championship.

That was the big news in 1969, but there was another exciting development involving that season about a year later. That's when pitcher (and later TV personality) Jim Bouton's book *Ball Four* was published. In it Bouton discussed in candid detail the on and off (especially off) the field behavior of his teammates on the Seattle and Houston clubs that year. It was a controversial and, to some, a shocking book at that time. (Bouton, incidentally, is included among the cards.) The short-lived Seattle organization was an interesting story, too. The team played only one year and went bankrupt, re-appearing in Milwaukee the following spring. If you want a Seattle Pilots team, you'll have to buy the 1969 season cards. They never played again.

This 1969 card set, brand new in 1990 and made with present-day APBA card-making formulas, costs only \$24.00 (\$25.44 in Pa., \$26.40 foreign). It is a card set only, not a complete game. It includes 600 player cards — 25 for each of the 24 big league clubs in 1969 — in team envelopes, plus a lineup sheet. For delivery information, please read the "Sales & Delivery and Credit Card Policies" on the reverse side.

MASTER GAME SYMBOLS FOR THIS NEW 1969 SEASON ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT \$4.00 (\$4.24 in Pa., \$4.40 foreign).

Customers living in Pennsylvania must add 6% sales tax to all prices, and residents of foreign countries must add 10%. (But APO and FPO addressees pay the regular U.S. prices.)

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You may use the order blank on the reverse side, but no special order blank is required.