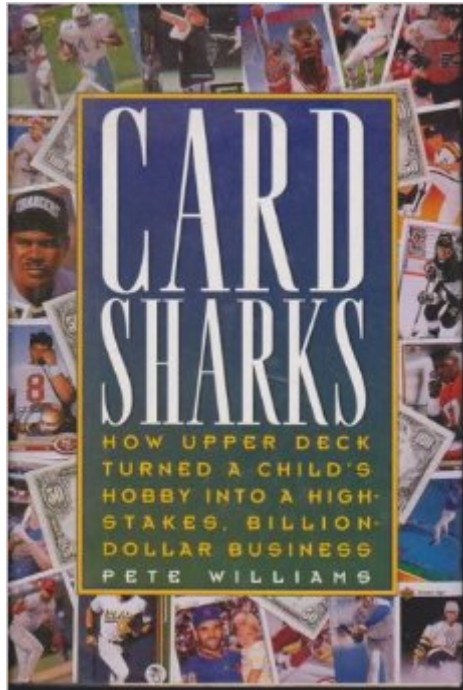


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# Card Sharks: How Upper Deck Turned A Child's Hobby Into A High-Stakes, Billion-Dollar Business



## Synopsis

Taking the reader from the birth of sports cards in the 1880s to the present, Williams investigates the success in the shady world of baseball cards. At the center of the industry is Upper Deck, the largest manufacturer, with sales of over \$260 million each year. Williams exposes how the power brokers in the game of baseball have changed this once-innocent hobby forever. Published in 1995 when Williams was a writer and columnist for USA Today Baseball Weekly, *Card Sharks* has been frequently cited by other authors and remains the definitive investigative look into the trading card business.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The back-stage temper tantrum of Mickey Mantle speaks volumes on what has become a multi-billion-dollar industry in baseball cards and sports memorabilia. Author Pete Williams shows an angry and bitter Mantle after a 1993 appearance on a national home shopping program that was in conjunction with the MLB All-Star Game festivities put on by Upper Deck - railing about the the host's questions, which may not have helped in pushing his autographed merchandise - and attempting to negotiate the following weekend's appearances for the company into being considered as two events, which will make the Yankee legend closer to accumulating enough dates in the year for his nearly \$3 million salary to sign autographs on "exclusive" memorabilia. From the days when baseball cards were used as inserts to secure the packaging of tobacco products to the bubble-gum wars waged by Topps on other companies and a landmark judicial decision in 1980

that opened the doors wide open for a competitive marketplace in baseball card sets, Williams ambitiously covers the bases as he delves into the creation of Upper Deck, an idea from a frustrated card dealer who was tired of buying bogus memorabilia and an inventor who could add a unique identification tag to thwart counterfeiters. While the story is initially driven by an entrepreneurial spirit born in the 1980s, neither of the founders are in the picture a few years later as the company profits explode as it becomes the high-end retailer in sports cards and collectibles through aggressive marketing and the securing of legends with exclusive and lucrative promotional contracts, along with the baggage from any number of controversies and allegations of unsavory business practices and fraud.

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