



Baseball Cards

In 1984, Lew Lipset reported that Bob Sevchuk reconstructed the first print run Sheets A and B.

1953 Topps, a much closer look

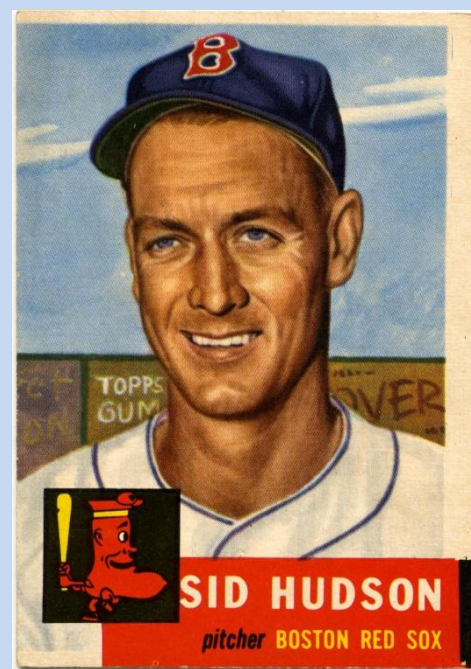


By George Vrechek

Tom Billing of Springfield, Ohio, is a long-time collector of vintage baseball cards. Billing is among a small group of collectors who continue to stay enthused about old cardboard by discovering and collecting variations, printing differences and other oddities. Often such discoveries are of interest to a fairly limited audience. Occasionally though, such discoveries amount to a loose string that, if pulled, unravel mysteries of interest to many. I pulled on one of Tom's strings recently.

Sid Hudson throws the first curve

The "string" that Billing sent me was an image of a miscut 1953 Topps of Sid Hudson. The right edge of the base of the off-centered card had a tiny sliver of black to the right of the otherwise red base nameplate. Was



this a variation, a printing difference or none of the above? Would anyone care? As I thought about it, I voted for none of the above since it was really just a miscut card showing some of the adjacent card on the print sheet. But wait a minute! That shouldn't have happened with the 1953 Topps. Why not? We will see.

The loose string was an off-center Lou Hudson showing an adjacent black border.



An almost great article

Ten years ago I wrote an *SCD* article about the printing of the 1952 Topps. I received some nice feedback on that effort in which I utilized arithmetic, miscuts and partial sheets to offer an explanation of how the 1952 set was printed and the resulting scarcities. As part of that exercise I looked at the printing of the 1953 Topps set and was quite proud that I had figured out the print runs. I use the term print runs rather than series, because, as we will see, the cards printed didn't always follow in a numerical series. No one said I was wrong, and no new discoveries regarding the printing of 1953 Topps had crossed my path. It turns out I was wrong on some of my conclusions about the third and fourth print runs of 1953 Topps. I needed to take a closer look.

Single prints never existed

My 10-year-old article concluded that in 1952 and 1953 Topps printed each print run on two sheets of 100 cards each resulting in an "A" sheet and a "B" sheet. A base of 60 or 80 players would be arranged to print two, three or four of each card on the two sheets. Eighty player cards could be expanded to 200 cards by printing 40 players 3 times and printing 40 other players 2 times. Sixty players could be expanded to 200 cards by printing 40 players 3 times and printing 20 players 4 times. There was no such thing as a single-printed card. Double-printed cards were about as scarce as they came.

This is likely how the 1953 Topps cards would have been printed – if, everything had gone right.

1953 TOPPS PRINTING <u>IF</u> EVERYTHING HAD GONE RIGHT					
	Run #1	Run #2	Run #3	Run #4	Total
4 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players			20	20	40
Number of cards in that run			80	80	160
3 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players	40	40	40	40	160
Number of cards in that run	120	120	120	120	480
2 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players	40	40			80
Number of cards in that run	80	80			160
Total number of players	80	80	60	60	280
Total number of cards printed	200	200	200	200	800

Why do some people still refer to single and double prints for certain cards in these sets? My view of it is that the terminology is left over from the early days of the hobby and it sounds more valuable if sellers tout single prints rather than double or triple prints, even though that's what they are in many cases.

Half a picture can be misleading

Uncut partial sheets of 1952 Topps appeared at a 1980 Baltimore show. An uncut 100-card sheet of 1954 Topps appeared about the same time. In the early 1980s collectors concluded from looking at the sheets in front of them that, if there were 80 cards in a run, 60 were single prints and 20 were double prints. However, they were only looking at one-half of the picture. They missed finding that there were A and B sheets of 100 cards each with 40 cards printed 2 times and 40 cards printed 3 times.

Mathematically they thought that single prints were twice as scarce as the regular cards and priced them accordingly. In the above example of 80 cards in a run, the reality is that double prints are 1.5 times as scarce as triple prints. In a 60 player run example, the scarcer 40 cards are printed 3 times versus 4 times for the other 20 cards. The scarcer cards are not twice as scarce; they are only a lousy 1.33 times as scarce. How they should be priced is another matter.

Current nomenclature for SP and DP

Price guides today have adjusted their language to describe print run scarcities, but there is still confusion. The designation "SP" does not mean single print today but rather short print. The DP designation in guides is usually defined as a double print, which would imply that other cards are single prints. However, you can also find price guide explanations acknowledging that DP does not mean that the cards were printed twice as often but perhaps 50% as often – or some other percentage that remains a mystery.

I like SP for short print, but a better abbreviation than DP would be "CTWAPSWPMFTOCITSPRDBTFOI" meaning "cards that we are pretty sure were printed more frequently than other cards in the same print run, but don't bet the farm on it." Perhaps this is too long an abbreviation. I will use the designation DP to save space, as long as you promise to remember that it doesn't mean double print.

News on the 1953s

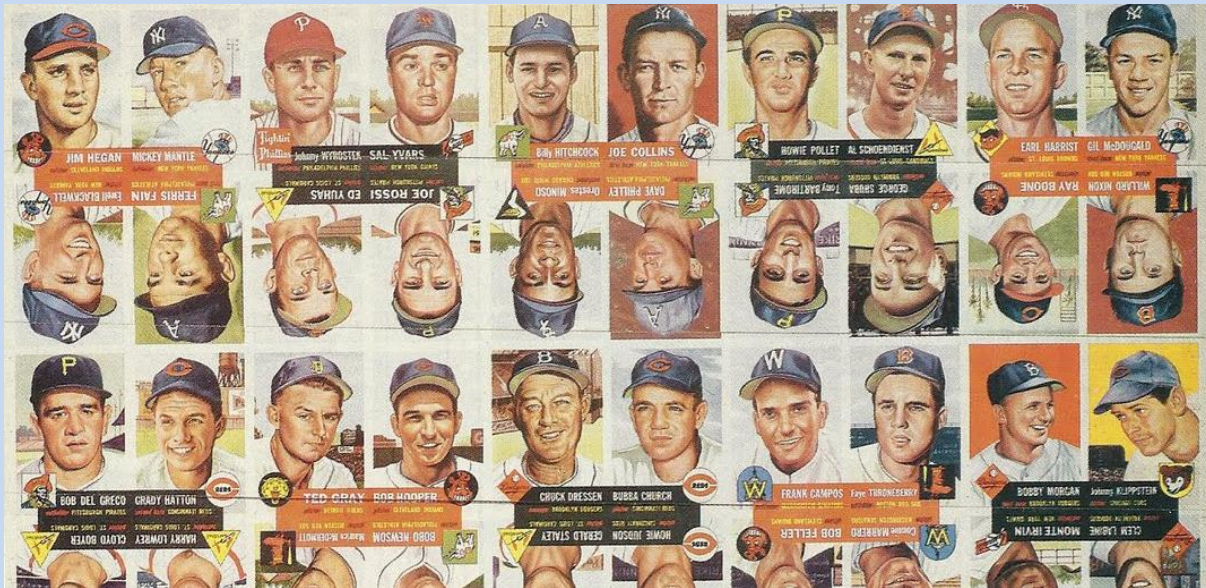
The 1953 set has been my favorite. I collected them as a kid and can still tell you who the player is by looking at just the top of his hat. This familiarity came in handy as I started to dig into the printing of the set. My 10-year old article made a lot of sense to me at the time, but I wanted to revisit my assumptions as a result of the "string" that Billing provided with his Sid Hudson. I needed to look at what else had been written about the 1953 Topps printing.

Hobby writer Dave Hornish pointed me to a 1984 article in Krause's *Baseball Cards* magazine by Lew Lipset which included photos of sheets constructed by Bob Sevchuk from 20-card strips comprising the first print run Sheets A and B. The strips were cut off-center from the dividing line between the cards making it easy to match the original arrangement of cards that formed the two sheets. Collector Bob Lapidus told me in 2015 that Sevchuk said he was able to put together six sheets from the first print run from strips found behind a furnace.

Forty players were printed twice and 40 players three times, although the 1984 article didn't see it that way. Topps carefully matched the red and black bases by inverting every other row of cards. Since the bases did not extend all the way across the bottom of the cards, it got a little complicated to layout the sheets. In 2014 Bob Lemke reported a memo from the Topps archives identifying the six players pulled from the 1953 set because of licensing concerns. The art work for the players had also been found. In 2014 Heritage Auctions sold a reconstructed sheet of the first 1953 Topps print run consisting of 5 strips of 20 cards each.

Accounting for red and black bases

Seeing the sheet layouts turned on a light bulb. My old article had failed to take into account the importance of matching red and black bases when I tried to figure out how many cards of each player were in each print run. I had been off base (as it were) trying to account for the five cards which slipped around between the first three printings (more on that in a moment). I also had to figure out, if Topps had been so careful to match red and black bases for printing, why did Billing's Sid Hudson have a black edge?



I got out my well-worn set of 1953 cards and arranged them by print runs and by their bases: red boxes justified right or left and black boxes justified right or left. I needed to sort through the confusion created by Topps printing 5 cards from the first 85 cards in the second print run, moving 5 cards from the second run into the third run of 80 and deleting and replacing 6 card numbers from the last run. In the process it became clear what logic had been employed by Topps.

The design idea

Here is my theory of what happened. Sy Berger and Woody Gelman were young and energetic in 1953 and weren't apparently fazed by cooking up complex design requirements for the 1953 baseball set. Topps had many, but not all, of the players under licensing agreements. Bowman had some of the same players. Topps felt comfortable putting out a set of just 280 players under contract. The plan was to put 80 cards in each of the first two print runs and 60 in each of the last two. The early season first printings were expected to sell better than the later printings. Eighty players would be printed 40 times 3 and 40 times 2 on 2 100-card sheets. Sixty players would be printed 40 times 3 and 20 times 4.

The Dvorak paintings and interview

Berger and Gelman decided to have each card painted rather than using photos. Hornish raised the possibility that the paintings may have avoided further licensing issues with Bowman as the use of photographic images for dual-signed players. Bowman was using the opposite approach going from paintings to photographs in 1953. The 1984 *Baseball Cards* magazine had an interview by Paul Green with artist Gary Dvorak who painted about 50 of the 1953 Topps portraits. Dvorak was brought on by Gelman because he was a young illustrator who could do realistic paintings. Topps provided black and white 8 by 10 photos to Dvorak and maybe four other artists. The artists didn't necessarily even know who the players were. They were told the uniform colors and created their own backgrounds to use

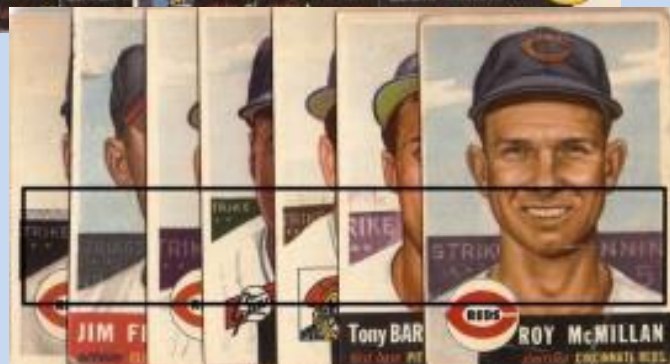
behind the players from ballpark photos. Dvorak painted using opaque watercolors and produced paintings about twice the size of the cards.

Dvorak recalled having to redo the painting for Bob Borkowski because the photo he was given was not that good, and that Topps “rejected” a painting he did for Curt Simmons. Simmons did not appear in the Topps set and the rejection likely related to Simmons being under a license agreement with Bowman. He was in the Bowman sets exclusively between 1953 and 1955. Richie Ashburn, Andy Pafko, Max Lanier and Jim Suhecki were other players who were portrayed on artwork but not on a card. Dvorak said Topps instructed them to do head and shoulder shots and not action images, although this directive must have changed later since there are several body shots in the last two runs.

Topps didn't like the plain backgrounds, but it was probably too late for the artists to redo them.

Background art

Topps gave Dvorak a little grief as well for his paintings of Bobby Morgan and Willard Nixon because the backgrounds were too plain. Dvorak spiced up Clem Labine's background with a fictitious Topps advertising sign. Sid Hudson and Willie Maranda also got Topps signs.



A house , commercial building, fence or garage roof provided some background variety without taking too much artistic time. Artists worked by the painting, not by the hour.

Artists reused background concepts. What looks like a garage roof peaks up over the fence and then moves left behind many players. A commercial building has a consistent design over the shoulders of Billy Martin and others. A scoreboard showing strikes and innings looms over Roy McMillan and others who would not have been in the same ballpark. A purplish-gray outfield fence was another fairly standard backdrop in the last run.

Although offered a set of the 1953 Topps cards, Dvorak didn't take them, and he saved nothing from his work product. He said he was paid \$25 per painting and could do two or three paintings on a weekend while moonlighting from his other job. The paintings were incredibly clear, bright and realistic. As a kid I remember thinking the paintings were really nice, and I didn't notice the shortcuts. I tried doing some of my own.

Planning ahead to pick the players

The \$25 per painting paid to the artists added \$7,000 to the production costs (\$63,000 in today's dollars). Artists would have to be given adequate lead time to crank out 280 paintings on the weekends, and Topps had to make some guesses as to who would be playing in 1953. For example, Berger's buddy Willie Mays was in the army for most of 1952 and all of 1953. Faye Throneberry and Dick Brodowski were in the service as well. Rookies like Bill Glynn, Dick Bokelman and Cal Hogue were up for a cup of coffee at best in 1953. Sam Jones played in the minors for Indianapolis for all of 1953 and 1954. Bill Norman, Dixie Walker and Johnny Riddle were coaches. Fred Hutchinson and Charlie Dressen were managers. All of the above people were included. In any event, Berger came up with 280 guys to put on cards. At least with paintings, Topps could repaint someone's uniform if they got traded or if the entire team moved, which was the case with the Boston Braves deciding to move to Milwaukee in March 1953.

Logic adds to the challenge

Berger/Gelman further complicated matters by evening out the players with 140 American Leaguers and 140 National Leaguers for, not only the entire set, but within each print run. Black name plate boxes were used for National Leaguers and red boxes for American Leaguers. I talked to Len Brown who worked at Topps from 1959 to 2000. Brown worked on the 1963 baseball set which had a similar design with colored bases running across the entire bottom of each card. Brown said, "They were concerned about colors running between the cards with the color bleeding to the edges.... People who worked on the 1963 set had also worked on the 1953 set." Consequently it was logical that the 1953 design involved matching all the red and black bases.

The color bleeding concern may have had more to do with selecting an even split between the leagues than did license agreements or the appeal of the players selected. Topps apparently didn't want to cover the entire bottom of the handsome paintings and justified the boxes left or right to show more of the painting. This further complicated the work for the layout folks. Collectors in 1953 weren't too concerned that the black and red card edges easily chipped, nor was Topps.

Brown said Berger would have likely given the production people the players' card numbers in advance, which would have also required that they figure out in advance the split between the leagues and the left and right justifications. My hunch is that the 160 cards in the first two print runs were all ready to go at about the same time before March of 1953.

Dealing the cards

Having finally figured out what Topps was up to, I laid out my 1953s like the layout folks would have. For the first run I had the advantage of seeing the uncut sheets from the Lew Lipset article. I was having fun laying them out to match four black corners and then four red corners. I “played” the cards in numeric order and it almost worked perfectly for the first 80 cards. I laid down 79 of the 80 cards numbered between 1 and 80. The card I had left in my hand was #72 Fred Hutchinson (or any other card with a red base justified to the right).

The first print run could have remained in numerical order with only one exception: trading Hutchinson for Pollet.

Trades to complete the puzzles

What I needed though to complete the puzzle of matching the bases was a black/right-justified base like that featured on upcoming #83 Howie Pollet's card. Did someone at Topps goof in figuring out who went where? Did someone get traded from the National League to the American League to mess up the colors? I didn't find anyone like that; the closest fit was Ewell Blackwell went from Cincinnati to the Yankees but in August 1952. Topps had no prior history of intentionally skipping numbers in a set and didn't go that route in later years either. (They may have played around a little with #49 Murphy's card in the 1951 Ringside set.)



They could have switched Pollet for Hutchinson (or some other “red/right”) and left it at that. Perhaps they looked at card #82 next to Pollet, which was Mickey Mantle, and decided that he might also be a good guy to have in the first run to perk up sales. While the only switch Topps needed to make was trading Hutchinson for Pollet, Topps made three other switches of like-designed cards: #44 Ellis Kinder and #61 Early Wynn got traded for Mantle and #84 Bob Hooper. Smokey Burgess #10 was switched for #85 Bobby Morgan. Joe Black #81 stayed out of the way and remained with the second printing guys.

Was it Mantle at #82 which caused Topps to trade out three like-aligned cards? Kinder, Wynn and Burgess were replaced by Mantle, Hooper and Morgan. Perhaps Topps wanted us to look for some missing numbers and buy more cards to find them?



Another possibility is that there were four players (numbered #10, 42, 61, and 72) originally intended for the first printing, like perhaps Dvorak's Curt Simmons, who were pulled because of licensing issues and replaced by cards from the second group of 80. Their numbers could have been re-assigned to others in time to join the second printing.

Cards by team

With the above changes, all the blacks and reds evened out nicely in the first printing. The 40 American Leaguers matched 40 National Leaguers. The results by team though were rather strange. You would expect about 5 players for each of the 16 teams; however there were 9 Indians, 9 Red Sox, but only 2 Senators and 1 Tiger. There were 8 Dodgers (you could tell where Topps was headquartered) and 8

Cardinals, but only 2 (Boston) Braves and 3 Phillies. Perhaps it was getting all too complicated trying to make things logical.

Catalog history

At least with the first run uncut sheets, we know what cards were printed twice and what cards were printed three times. Former *SCD* catalog editor Bob Lemke told me that the short/double print designations for the rest of the set likely came from dealer sources like Larry Fritsch who had an extensive inventory. Dan Hitt, senior market analyst for Beckett Media, didn't think they had information anymore as to how the initial SP/DP designations were made. I got the feeling that the history of identifying print quantities was rather old and murky.

Dealing out the second printing

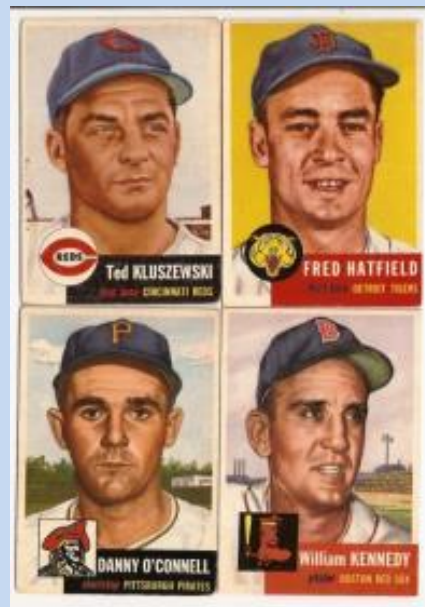
The second print run was also 80 cards and I took my 5 leftovers from the first printing (Burgess, Kinder, Wynn, Hutchinson and Black) and combined them with the next 75 cards. I was able to layout 77 of the 80 cards. It was like playing solitaire though. When I got to the end, I still had three cards which didn't match. This time there were three red-rights rather than just the one in the first print run. In order to match the bases, I needed one black/left and two red/lefts. Topps solved this problem by taking all of the next five cards (#161 through #165) and pulling #s 94, 107, 131, 145 and 156 to use in the third print run.

In order for the second printing to properly match base colors, Topps needed to remove three "red/right" cards and replace them with a black/left and two red/lefts. Therefore #131 Byrd, #145 Dorish and #156 Rivera were removed and replaced with #161 Bickford, #164 Shea and #165 Hoeft. Notice the "Harry Byrd" sign in the outfield over Byrd's shoulder and the "Dorish" sign over his shoulder.

#162 Kluszewski and #163 Hatfield were in the middle of the numeric order with Bickford, Shea and Hoeft and were moved to the second printing as well replacing the like-aligned #107 O'Connell and #94 Kennedy.

Further evidence of the cards comprising the second print run is found in the treatment of the ink color on the player bio information on the backs. Sometime during the second printing Topps decided to delete the black ink used and replace it with white ink (actually no ink since it is the color of cardboard) for the rest of the second printing and the next two runs as well. The black ink bled into the surrounding red ink on occasion. All cards in the second run are fairly easily found with both variations.

When the dust settled, Topps had 40 guys to print 3 times and 40 guys to print 2 times, although no uncut second printing sheets have been found to confirm the theory. The cumulative breakout by team is still lopsided. While there were exactly 40 more American Leaguers and 40 National Leaguers, there were lots of Yankees (14), Dodgers (12), Indians (13) and Reds (13) but not many White Sox (6).



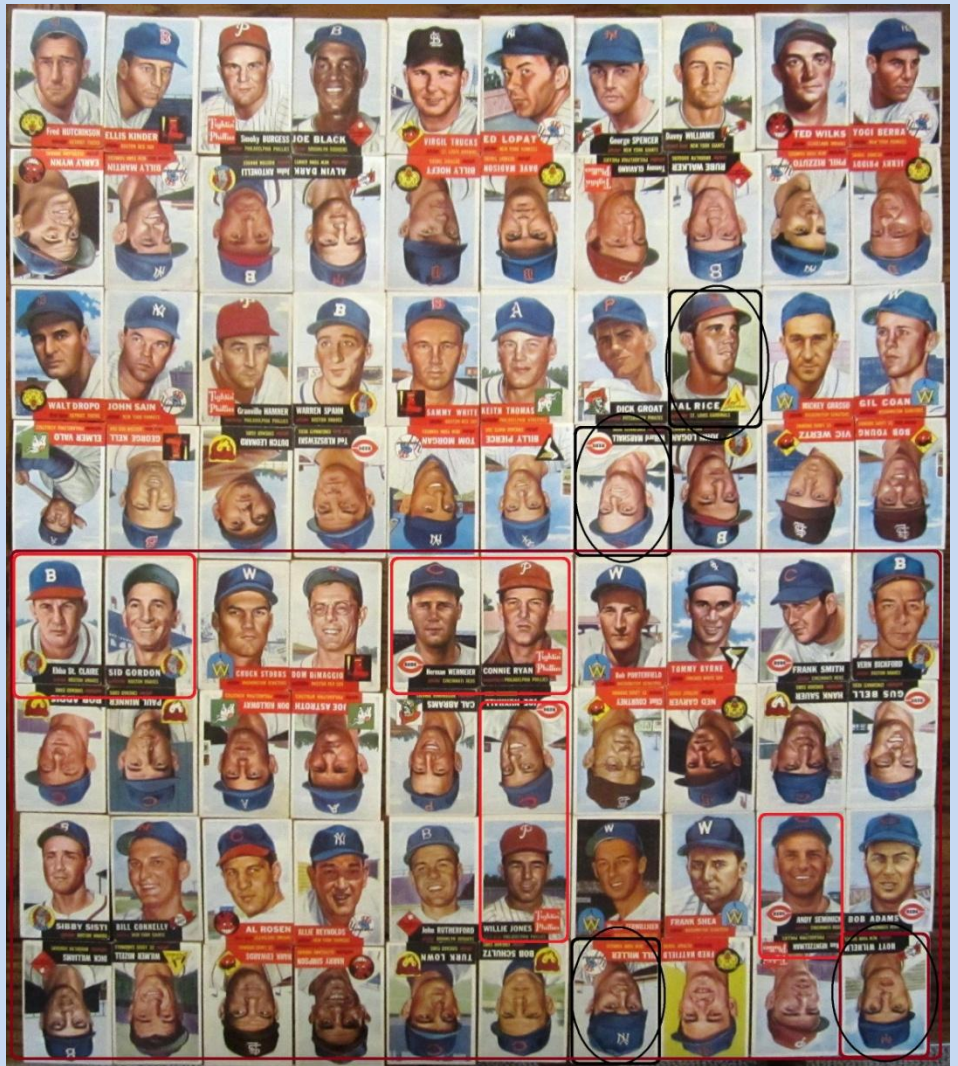
Scarce cards which aren't

The price guides identify five cards left off the first printing (#10, 44, 61, 72, and 81) as short prints and price them higher than DPs and even considerably higher than second printing short prints. These five cards could not logically have been printed in any lesser quantity than the scarcest of the second print run players. The black and red ink would have been all goofed up. The prices for these five guys are too high, unless the hobby has a particular fondness for them, or someone turns up with an uncut sheet to disprove my theory.

More short prints that aren't

I found inconsistencies between the 40 cards identified by price guides as short prints in the second run and the base colors and alignments needed to get the 40 cards into two strips of 20 cards each. When you add in the five holdover cards from the first printing and take out the five omitted cards and then divide those cards per the price guides between short prints and DPs, you will find that the bases don't

match up like they should. Two cards with black bases aligned to the left (like #95 Willard Marshall and #93 Hal Rice) need to be included as short prints rather than DPs. Conversely, one black based card aligned right (like #151 Hoyt Wilhelm) and one red based card (like #100 Bill Miller) need to move from the short prints to the DPs. I found a miscut of Hoyt Wilhelm indicating that he was likely on the outer edge of a print sheet which would be consistent with the layout of the DP cards. The other three players I moved based on population numbers (more on that later).



Price guides identify 40 cards that were short printed in the second run represented by the top 4 rows, but it is unlikely they found the right 40 cards. This hypothetical layout moves four cards (outlined) to create a logical print-sheet layout. Miscuts provided clues to the specific placement of a few cards.

The 60 players in the third print run were likely printed 40 times 3 and 20 times 4 on two 100-card sheets. The above 60 players have been arranged in a hypothetical base sheet.

Final printing gets complicated

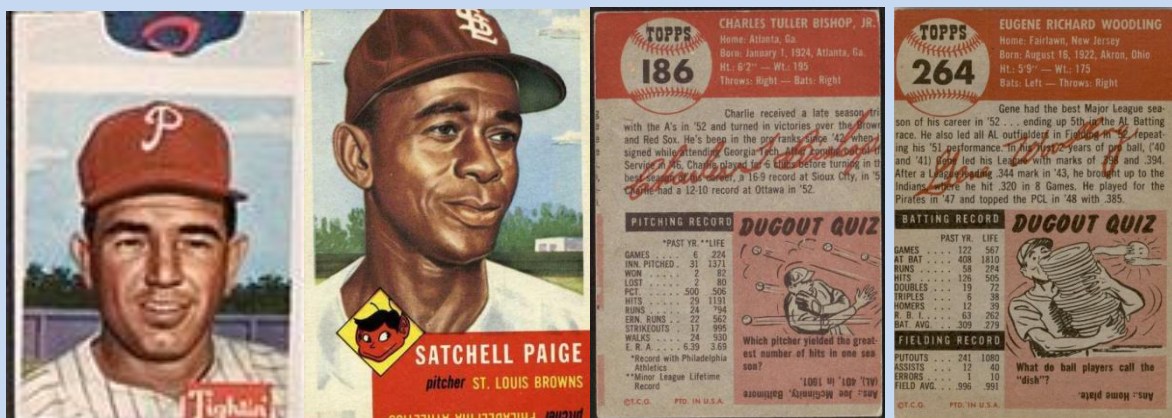
The final print run of most Topps sets had the lowest sales and consequently has the highest prices today. Topps was ready to go in the final run with 28 more National Leaguers and 32 more American Leaguers which would have evened out the leagues in the entire set. It would make sense to match two rows with the same colored bases to form strips of 20 cards. With the 20-card strips needing to remain together, the logical layout would have been two sheets with 40 players printed 3 times and 20 players printed 4 times. However there weren't 60 players in the final printing but only 54. The story has been around for a long time that Topps withdrew six cards because of questions about the strength of the Topps license agreements.

In 2014, Bob Lemke reported the find of an internal Topps memo confirming the identity of the missing six players. Keith Olbermann reported Lemke's find on ESPN. The missing players are Joe Tipton, Ken Wood, Hoot Evers, Harry Brecheen, Billy Cox and Pete Castiglione. The missing numbers are 253, 261, 267, 268, 271 and 275. The artwork was also found. Blogger Bob Wong even prepared a layout for the cards. (See bobscustomcards.blogspot.com.) The 54 cards printed by Topps were missing 4 (red) American Leaguers and 2 (black) National Leaguers to keep the ink from bleeding. The six players listed in the memo would have filled the voids exactly.

Bowman didn't use Brecheen and Castiglione either in 1953; the others were in the 1953 Bowman sets. The six players may have been originally intended to be in earlier print runs which would be more logical than having all of the licensing problems in one batch. Maybe they were problem children as early as the first print run (with the five out-of-sequence numbers), got pushed off to the last printing and then finally dropped. There was also artwork for Ashburn, Simmons, Pafko, Lanier and Suhecki which never made it as far as the list of 280.

Step 1 - The solitaire game

I used mockups of the 6 missing players along with the 54 cards which were issued to play my game of 1953 Topps solitaire whereby I matched red and black bases. The price guides began identifying short prints and DPs in this final series by the late 1980s. The colors and box locations matched nicely except cards known as short prints and DPs in the price guides didn't exactly match the normal base-color layout. I played with the cards and moved a minimal number of players between the short print and DP rows. I took into account miscuts we found involving Mays/Sandlock, Sandlock/Hudson, Coleman/Bolling, Woodling/Pillette, Roe/Haddix and Krsnich/Milliken. In most cases the miscuts were very slight and the resulting clues very obscure.



TOPPS 186
CHARLES TOLLER BISHOP, JR.
 Home: Atlanta, Ga.
 Born: January 1, 1924, Atlanta, Ga.
 Ht: 5'7" — Wt: 185
 Throws: Right — Bats: Right

Charlie received a late season tri- with the A's in '52 and turned in victories over the Brown and Red Sox. He's been in the pro ranks since '42 when signed while attending Georgia Tech. After playing for the Service in '45, Charlie played for the Athletics before turning in his best season in '52, a 15-9 record at Sioux City, in '53. He had a 12-10 record at Ottawa in '52.

PITCHING RECORD	
PAST YR.	LIFE
GAMES	6 224
INN. PITCHED	31 1371
WON	2 82
LOST	2 80
PCT.	500 506
HITS	25 1181
RUN.	24 134
ERN. RUNS	22 562
STRIKEOUTS	17 995
WALKS	24 330
E. R. A.	6.39 3.69

*Record with Philadelphia Athletics.
 *Minor League Lifetime Record.
 Ant.: Joe McHenry, Baltimore
 © T.C. PTD. IN U.S.A.

TOPPS 264
EUGENE RICHARD WOODLING
 Home: Fairtown, New Jersey
 Born: August 16, 1922, Akron, Ohio
 Ht: 5'9" — Wt: 175
 Bats: Left — Throws: Right

Gene had the best Major League season of his career in '52... ending up 5th in the AL Batting race. He also led all AL outfielders in Fielding %! Repeating his '51 performance, in 1952-53 years of pro ball, 140 and 411 hits led his League with marks of 334 and 394. After a League-leading 344 mark in '43, he brought up to the Indians where he hit .320 in 8 Games. He played for the Pirates in '47 and topped the PCL in '48 with .385.

BATTING RECORD	
PAST YR.	LIFE
GAMES	122 567
AT BAT	488 1810
RUNS	58 284
HITS	176 505
DOUBLES	19 72
TRIPLES	6 38
HOMERS	12 39
R. B. I.	63 262
BAT. AVG.	309 379

FIELDING RECORD	
PAST YR.	LIFE
PUTOUTS	241 1080
ASSISTS	12 40
ERRORS	1 10
FIELD AVG.	396 396

What do ball players call the "dish"?
 Ant.: Home plate.
 © T.C. PTD. IN U.S.A.

Miscuts: Easy to spot Nuxall above Jones and Charlie Bishop below Satchel. Harder to figure out that Crandall is next to Bishop. A trace of Pillette's signature pops into the back of Woodling.

Step 1 - The first step in creating a hypothetical print layout involves including mockups for the six pulled cards and then matching SP and DP base colors in the fourth print run. The four rows of SPs are the first four rows followed by two rows of DPs. A few SPs have to be moved to DPs and vice versa. (Layouts for the six cards that were later pulled - courtesy of Bob Wong)





Step 2

Step 2 is to pull the six problem players from the original hypothetical layout.

Step 2 – pull 6 cards

The next step at Topps was when Berger probably ran in to stop the production of the six cards with licensing issues. Six cards were pulled. But what happened to fill the holes created in the layout? Other cards from that run had to be used which would have meant that six other cards would have been printed more times than usual. Logically those re-used cards would have been the same color and justification as the pulled cards.

Step 3 replacements and finally back to Sid Hudson

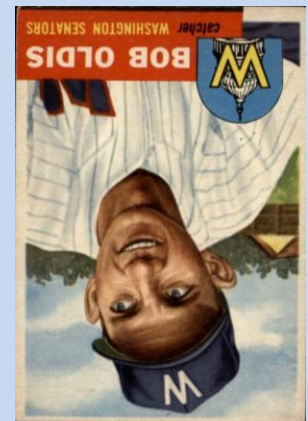
Unlike any other 1953 Topps cards I have seen, the red-based Sid Hudson was printed next to a black-based card. Logic would say that at least one other red card would have been tainted by the intruding additional black card. It didn't take too long to find miscuts that lead Billing and me to the conclusion

that two of the cards butting up to Hudson were the red Bob Oldis and the black Mike Sandlock. Oldis miscuts seem to consistently have a black border courtesy of Mike Sandlock. Hudson and Oldis weren't the oddballs; it was Sandlock. National Leaguer Mike Sandlock, who is still with us at age 100, got copied from his spot next to Willie Mays (determined from another miscut) to a space next to Sid Hudson which had been reserved for one of the pulled American Leaguers. Finding Sandlock on the sheet in two different places also adds credibility to the position that Topps never printed and destroyed cards for the missing six players, but just substituted other cards in the same run like Sandlock.

We have not found any other instance of a card being matched like this. Why did the black-based Sandlock get moved instead of a red card? Maybe the Topps art department had to go to lunch, and Sandlock got the nod. We don't know. Nor do we know with certainty the identity of all six cards that filled the voids created by the pulled cards. Absent any other miscuts with a trace of the wrong color, I would have to assume that the other replacement cards matched up.

Depending on what row the replacement cards were pulled from, they could have been printed either 6, 7 or 8 times on the two 100-card sheets comprising the fourth run. Based on miscuts, it looks to me that Sandlock, Joe Coleman, Preacher Roe and Gene Woodling were four of the "high-multiple" prints.

I took a stab at guessing the identities of the other two cards as described later. The six replacement players likely also remained in the same row that they were in originally.



Sandlock replaced the "red-left" card of someone like Hoot Evers, who was pulled from the set.



Two miscuts of Mike Sandlock (in front of the familiar gray fence) show that he was duplicated and aligned both with another black based card (Willie Mays) and with Sid Hudson (in front of a Topps advertising sign).

PSA populations

What we do have, however, are population numbers published by PSA for each of the cards they have graded. That should give us some clues about print quantities.

PSA has graded more than 118,000 1953 Topps. If everyone had sent their cards into PSA to be graded in 1953, we wouldn't need any uncut sheets to figure out the print runs. The PSA population numbers would tell us everything we need to know. However, in 1953 no one had thought about putting baseball cards in plastic cases before flipping them or trying to stick them in bike spokes. Consequently, only the survivors in fairly decent shape or star cards have made it to PSA. For example, the PSA population reports show that 92% of the 1953 cards were graded VG-EX or better. Six players (Campanella, Mantle, Jackie Robinson, Page, Mays, Ford and Berra) make up 3% of the set but account for 10% of the grades.

First, throw out the super stars

In order to test the relationship among the PSA population numbers, I set aside the frequently graded star cards as not being representative of relative scarcities. I then divided the commons by print run and identified cards as being either SP or DP according to the price guides for print runs 1, 2 and 4. Print run 3 has not been divided between SP and DP in the price guides. I then compared the number of cards graded by print run and whether they were listed as SP or DP. I found quite a range of numbers indicating some scarcities but not nearly the scarcities you would expect.

	Print Run Number		
	1	2	4
Average for short prints (SP)	378	336	372
Average for DPs	437	367	394
Ratio DP/SP	116%	109%	106%
Expected Ratio 3 to 2	150%	150%	
Expected Ratio 4 to 3			133%
Expected Ratio 7 to 3			233%

PSA population reports showed that the average for graded DP common cards in the first run exceeded those for short prints by 16%. The expected difference given a 3 to 2 actual printing ratio between the cards would be 150%. Cards identified as short prints in the second run are only 9% more numerous than DPs. In the 4th run, the difference is only 6%. Note that the average number of graded cards in each run is not that much different.

We know that 40 cards in print run #1 were printed 2 times or 3 times, which would yield a ratio of 150% if all the cards had survived and been sent to PSA. However the actual ratio is only 116%. This could be interpreted as collectors work on complete graded sets, and they get one card of each graded regardless of how difficult they were to acquire or, perhaps, not all the extra printed cards survived. Collectors dumped them or moms threw out the duplicates. The range among individual commons from each average was as much as 35% one way or the other. The PSA population numbers don't point to short prints being very scarce. They don't even indicate that the last printing was very scarce compared to the first two printings. Mathematically, since there are only 54 players in the last run compared to 80 players in the first run, the number of cards produced of each player would have been the same had Topps produced roughly one-third fewer total cards in the last run. Scarcities wouldn't be obvious until Topps cut their production by more than one-third.

Hal Rice gets promoted 62 years later

Despite the lack of a direct relationship between the PSA numbers and the print run quantities, I did find some unusual results which I used in my assumptions. In the second print run, I was missing two black-based cards that were justified on the left to include in short print cards. The average number of each

second run SP card graded by PSA is 336. Hal Rice #93 is listed as a DP. DPs average 367 graded cards. Hal Rice turned out to be the card with the least number of grades in the entire set; only 259 Hal Rices have been graded. Hal fit the bill to get promoted to SP status and I inserted him nicely into my hypothetical print layout. Willard Marshall was the next most likely DP candidate to get promoted based on population numbers so he joined Rice in order to create a logical layout.

EBay listings

In addition to the PSA numbers, I looked at current eBay listings for cards in the fourth run. On average, the entire fourth printing had 52 listings for each of the 54 cards in the run. However the range of listings was considerable. There were only 8 listings for short prints Willie Miranda and 14 for Dixie Howell, but there were 171 listings for Joe Coleman, 158 for Al Sima and 141 for Mike Sandlock. Miscuts of Sandlock, Coleman, Roe and Woodling next to cards thought to be short prints make it highly likely that these are four of the six replacement cards. I picked two more players: Lindell and Sima because of their high population reports and their base colors and alignments matched what was needed. Erault, Hemus and Shantz also had high PSA populations and eBay listings and might have been among the six replacements instead.

The last print run replacements

Absent any uncut sheets or significant inventories, the price guide editors thankfully avoided trying to make a distinction between third run cards which were likely printed either three or four times each. I think they should have refrained as well from guessing about the fourth run scarcities, except for finding the replacement cards which were printed 6, 7 or maybe even 8 times.

In my theoretical layout for the fourth printing I have Coleman, Sima, Roe, Woodling and Lindell printed 7 times; Sandlock printed 6 times (since he is found next to two other cards thought to be printed 3 times); 15 players printed 4 times and the remaining 33 players printed 3 times. However, various other combinations are possible depending on what the Topps layout people were thinking, and when they went to lunch.

Other oddities

Printing differences exist for a few cards and are of varying levels of significance. In addition to the other problems on Sandlock's card, there is a version where the background is washed out on the left edge. Shea and Schultz have some blotches that come and go in their sky backgrounds and Fridley's "r" in outfielder disappears sometimes. Mizell's Cardinal logo is always found with black birds rather than red birds. Pete Runnels card pictures Don Johnson. Satchel Page's name is consistently misspelled Satchell.

Card Backs

Topps introduced cartoons on the backs of the 1953 cards, a feature which continued, with some interruptions, until 1983. The "Dugout Quiz" questions were always informative and independent of the player featured. Young collectors were quizzed on rules, terminology, records and baseball history. Berger played it safe again by using "past year" instead of "1952" to describe the players' recent statistics, just in case Topps had to keep selling these cards beyond the current season. You can actually read the facsimile autographs on the back of the cards. Berger must not have given them their \$100 fee unless he could read their signatures?

1953 TOPPS PRINTING

What probably happened

	Run #1	Run #2	Run #3	Run #4	Total
7 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players				5	5
Number of cards in that run				35	35
6 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players				1	1
Number of cards in that run				6	6
4 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players			20	15	35
Number of cards in that run			80	60	140
3 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players	40	40	40	33	153
Number of cards in that run	120	120	120	99	459
2 CARDS PRINTED PER RUN					
Number of players	40	40			80
Number of cards in that run	80	80			160
<hr/>					
Total number of players	80	80	60	54	274
Total number of cards printed	200	200	200	200	800
<hr/>					
	Run #1	Run #2	Run #3	Run #4	Total
Number Sequence					
1-85	80	5			85
86-165		75	5		80
166-220			55		55
221-280				54	54
<hr/>					
	80	80	60	54	274

CARDS 10 44 61 72 81 printed in 2nd run

CARDS 94 107 131 145 156 printed in 3rd run

CARD numbers withdrawn from 4th print run are: 253 261 267 268 271 275

The four print runs likely consisted of 8 sheets of 100 cards producing 800 cards of 274 players. The black and red color-bleeding issue was important in trying to determine how many copies of each player were printed.

Conclusions

- Arranging 1953 Topps can be fun, and we need those 6 missing players to have everything appear nice and logical.
- Price guide identifications of SP and DP can be misleading. How about LP (long print) instead of DP? It is the opposite of a short print. Another designation used by some collectors is over-print.
- Price guides and seller prices for commons may not have any direct relationship to relative scarcities.
- Two cards identified in price guides as short prints in the 2nd run probably aren't, and two other cards identified as long prints are likely short prints. I'm betting that one of them is Hal Rice.
- The 4th print run likely had 6 players whose cards were printed 6 to 8 times. Mike Sandlock, Joe Coleman, Preacher Roe and Gene Woodling were probably 4 of the 6.
- The 4th run is a continuing puzzle. The PSA population numbers don't point to any great scarcities and the SP or DP designations should be removed, just like they are treated in the 3rd run. Once known, the 6 players printed 6 to 8 times should be shown as "long" prints.
- After all this, Sid Hudson's red edge and Bob Oldis' black edge are still just miscuts, although you can find a Mike Sandlock miscut with a black border or with a red border.

We need to find more miscuts or uncut sheets to finish the puzzle of 274 players placed on 800 cards (4 print runs of 200 cards each). Lew Lipset was looking for the same type of additional clues in his 1984 article. No such clues surfaced, according to a recent contact with Lipset, but there is still hope. Keep an eye out for those miscut cards.

Thanks to Tom Billing and other collectors who searched for miscut cards to work on the puzzle with me. I will report any new information received from readers. I expect other collectors have noticed some of the same issues and may have found some other pieces to the same 800-piece puzzle.

George Vrechek is a freelance contributor to Sports Collectors Digest and can be contacted at vrechek@ameritech.net

This article appeared in two parts in Sports Collectors Digest on December 25, 2015 and January 8, 2016. Thank you to SCD for allowing us to post the article on the OBC site.