

## The Genesis of the Project: One, Two, Many Answers

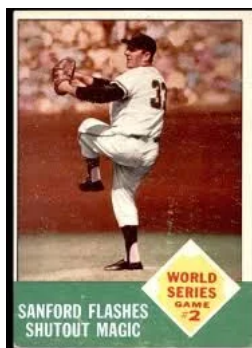
The first World Series I have any direct memory of was the Dodger-Yankee matchup of 1963. I didn't watch the games, but I recall walking into my friend Randy Richards's backyard and several adults were there drinking and watching the game on TV. I believe I saw Sandy Koufax strike out Mickey Mantle; I certainly heard the grownups talking about it. In the coming years, I would not how so many adults paused in their lives to watch, listen to, or talk about the World Series. And, of course, I recall eventually smuggling a transistor radio (that my father has gifted me from a trip to Japan) into school to listen to World Series games. The world slowed down for the fall classic in those days. Sadly, the World Series has nothing of that aura anymore. So that's one origin story of this project. What happened and with what consequences.



I envisioned the project as one of reading newspapers and sporting publications to see what I could learn. My health and energy level has made that difficult. I have done some of it – one alluring thing about it is the range of cities with would involve, from New York and Los Angeles to Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and San Francisco. But as a substitute I have been replaying those years, both regular and postseason, with Strat-o-Matic baseball (a lifelong hobby) and reading as many books as I could about those seasons (some of which are pictured at right). Regarding the choice of seasons, my initial thought was to examine eight World Series before my birth in 1955 and then the eight after my birth (so, along with the 1955 series, Brooklyn's only championship, this is seventeen seasons – don't know that I'll finish them, but I'm on 1949 and plowing ahead). I thought an ancillary benefit of the project, and especially about reading those newspapers, might be new insights into the world I was born into. But those years are also, obviously, the years of racial integration, continental expansion, and the growing role of television in the sport. So perhaps a better subtitle is “from Jackie to Sandy.”

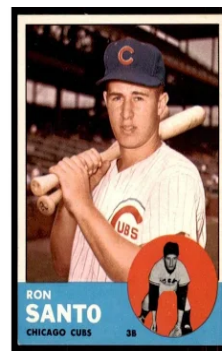
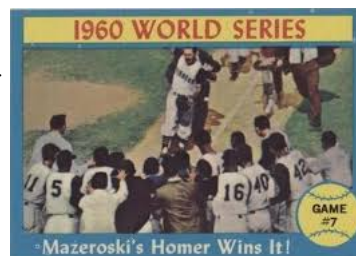


1955 Brooklyn Dodgers  
SchupakSports.com



Older Strat players will recall the iconic strat-o-matic ad that featured Jack Sanford

I cannot recall a time that the World Series did not fascinate me. Indeed, I think the first thing that ever fascinated me was the World Series. This happened surely before I had listened to much baseball on the radio much less watched baseball on TV. No, it was baseball cards that first got me into baseball and the World Series. And the Topps World Series cards drew me in. It probably began sometime in 1963 when I seven going on eight. Friends on the block got me into baseball cards and we had a little dice game with played them, 1-1 was a single, 2-2 a double, 3-3 a triple, 4-4 a



was with

walk, 5-5 a strike out, and 6-6 a home run. Everything else was an out (you can see why three years later a Christmas gift of Strat-o-Matic baseball thrilled me – a much better game to say the least). We also had some sort of gambling game we played with cards. I can't remember how it worked, but I do remember being utterly crestfallen when I lost the card of my favorite player, Ron Santo, in one of these tilts.

There is something about a best of seven series (just under 5% of a full season) that drew me in. Much better than a single-elimination playoff as it



allows story lines to develop, to get to know a team's strengths and weaknesses, and to give a decent – but not locked down – chance for the best team to emerge. (By the way, I think the card at the left first introduced me to Cincinnati



– I was growing up in Arlington Heights, Illinois, a northwest suburb of Chicago. I would wind up living and working in Cincinnati for over 40

years.