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Pete Williams

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(Mobile book) Card Sharks: How Upper Deck Turned a Child's Hobby into a High-Stakes, Billion-Dollar Business

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Pete Williams : Card Sharks: How Upper Deck Turned a Child's Hobby into a High-Stakes, Billion-Dollar Business before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Card Sharks: How Upper Deck Turned a Child's Hobby into a High-Stakes, Billion-Dollar Business:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Finally on KindleBy Ary D. RosenbaumThankfully, it's finally released on Kindle. Great story on the inner workings of Upper Deck from its founding until 1994. It starts with the history of baseball cards and the founding of Upper Deck. It's a book about great ideas, greed, and greed. Since the story end at the great strike of 1994, it would be great to have a sequel about how Upper Deck survived the big sports card crash that the industry has still never fully recovered from.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good Book of Baseball Card HistoryBy Andy E.This book highlights the rise and fall of the Upper Deck corporation, but really could be broken into 3 parts:1. A quick history of baseball cards and baseball card litigation2. The idea and upstart of the Upper Deck corporation3. The eventual take over of Upper Deck by Richard McWilliam and ensuing (questionable) business practicesThe first part of the book is really fun for those who might have grown up collecting baseball cards. The next couple parts have a fun baseball card part to them, since anyone who collected in the early

90s remembers how awesome Upper Deck was when it came on the scene, but they also have some fun stories about business. It's interesting to see how the inner workings of a really small company are/were handled (albeit from second hand information). I think that people who were active in baseball card collecting in the early 90s and have a little interest in business could find this a really interesting read. 11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Baseball Cards, Autographs and the Shrewd Marketing of Pop Culture By Best Of All 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 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. This is an incredible tale on how a kid's summer pastime became an industry monster that seemed so solid on the outside, but could pop at any time like a bubble blown too large from one small stick of gum. With the shrewd marketing of pop culture and the creation of a unique sports boutique based on its alleged rarity, Williams forges a classic story driven by the dreams of youth....and greed of adults.

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.

"Card Sharks is the full-length expose we'd been waiting for. It will make you sick. But a good kinda sick; sicker but wiser. Williams provides 270 pages of details on perhaps the sports industry's ultimate insult to modern America." - Phil Mushnick, *The New York Post* "A disturbing tale" - *The Bergen (NJ) Record* "A well-researched, well-written look at the cardboard industry, from both historical and ethical standpoints - and Williams certainly does dig up the dirt." - *New York Newsday* "A dim look into Upper Deck and some of its business practices" - *The Orange County (Calif.) Register*

From the Inside Flap Sports cards were invented in the 1880s when tobacco tycoon James Buchanan Duke thought of putting a piece of cardboard in cigarette packs to prevent them from getting crushed in shipping. The cards served as free advertising space and premiums to boost sales. Things have changed in 110 years. No longer a premium for another product, sports cards are the product. And a hot one at that. More than 10 million Americans collect sports cards, hoping one day to reap their "investment" benefits. How has the sports card industry, specifically the baseball card market, become a billion-dollar business in the past five years? Pete Williams, who has covered major league baseball and sports memorabilia for USA Today Baseball Weekly since 1991, has the perfect vantage point on what's caused this explosive success in the shaky and shady world of sports cards. His gripping narrative takes us from the birth of trading cards to the present, when the buying and selling of cards has become everyman's stock market. At the center of the industry is the Upper Deck Company. Once a one-man shop in Anaheim, California, it has grown into the largest manufacturer of sports cards, with sales of 1 billion since 1990. Along the way, Upper Deck has revolutionized the trading card business by introducing a stunning array of wildly designed cards with incredible action photos, ultraviolet coating, and holograms to prevent counterfeiting. Williams's account is the first solid investigative look at what goes on at Upper Deck and he reveals the tactics its owners use to dominate the trading card market. This book is a fascinating investigation of yet another facet of sports that has lost its innocence at the hands of greedy power brokers. But it's not just a story about sports; it's an absorbing tale about business, the costs of always going for the quick buck, and the way commercialism has seeped into every part of our society. *Card Sharks* will have you marveling at what this once-simple child's hobby has become.

From the Back Cover A white limousine drove up Pennsylvania Avenue past the White House. Upper Deck president Richard McWilliam leaned over his female companion and pointed at the Oval Office. It was there, he told her, that he and Reggie Jackson had met George Bush... Reggie had put in a call to the White House, and just like that, they were in the Oval Office. Reggie and Bush

talked politics. Then he and Reggie gave the ex-president-to-be some Upper Deck baseball cards. Bush said he would share the cards with his grandchildren. "It was way cool," McWilliam told his companion. McWilliam had invested \$2.4 million in cash and letters of credit in the startup of the Upper Deck Company. He wasn't involved at the very beginning, but by 1993 it was all his show. In five years, he had made over \$50 million in salary, dividends, and bonuses from Upper Deck. His 27 percent stake in the company was probably worth \$70 million. Most important, he was in control. Bill Hemrick, whose Upper Deck card shop had been the inspiration for the company, was gone, although he retained 4.2 percent of company stock. Paul Sumner, who had come up with the idea of making a better baseball card, owned 14.6 percent of the company, but he had limited involvement in Upper Deck. Very limited. McWilliam, a thirty-nine-year-old accountant-turned-entrepreneur was single and had Hall-of-Famer Reggie Jackson as his best friend. McWilliam's company produced the most popular sports cards in the world and was worth, by his estimate, \$250 million. He had even appeared on The Sporting News' annual list of the 100 most powerful people in sports. Funny how life had worked out for a guy who was never much of a sports fan.