



# BASEBALL CARD VANDALS

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*bro*  
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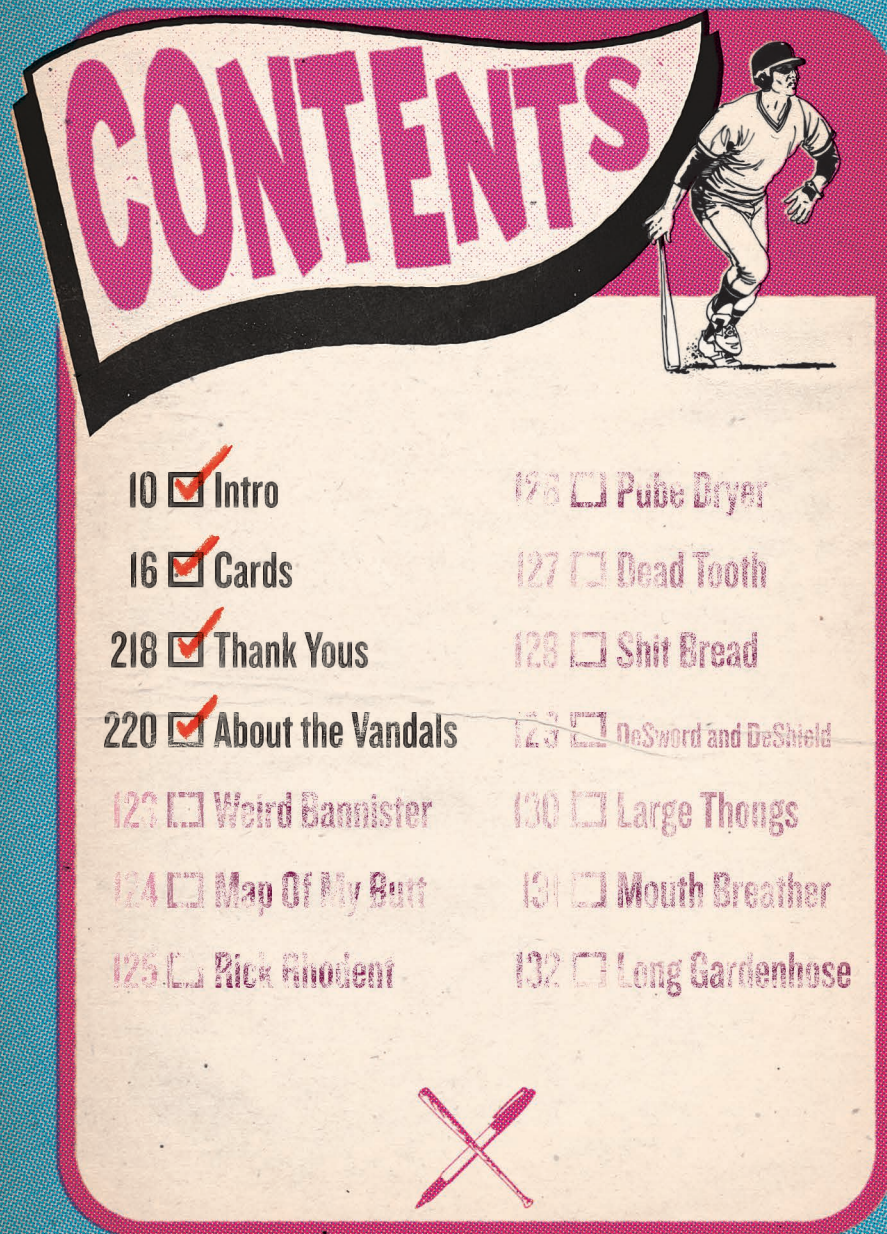
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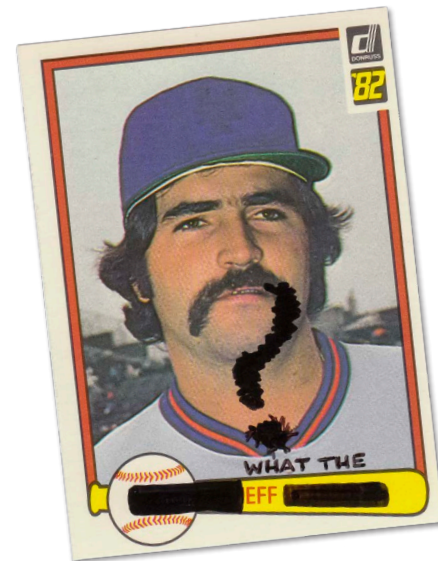

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# WHAT THE EFF IS BASEBALL CARD VANDALS?



## Decent jokes on worthless cards, posted fresh daily.

This was the mission statement dreamed up by two brothers, Beau and Bryan Abbott, when we began a project called Baseball Card Vandals back in 2012. As a pair of artistically inclined baseball nerds, we were honestly just trying to entertain ourselves and maybe some friends by scribbling crude jokes on our old baseball cards. In the years since our first Tumblr post in 2012, that mission hasn't really changed at all. Everything else in our lives, though—transformed by the strange power of Sharpies, old cardboard

and the glorious people of the internet—has changed completely. And to understand how Baseball Card Vandals went from a hobby to a website to a business to the book you're holding, you have to know how it all started: an obsession with baseball cards.

We grew up in the late 80s and early 90s in the suburbs of baseball-mad St. Louis and learned quickly from our older brothers Ben and Braden (yes, we're all Bs) that the best way to blow all of our allowance money was to turn every last cent of it into baseball cards. This became a hard-and-fast rule that also extended to any bonus money acquired from birthday gifts, visits from Nana, or some other invented scheme to generate capital



*TWO YOUNG VANDALS. AS YOU CAN SEE, WE REALLY LIKED KEN GRIFFEY, JR. AND THE BEASTIE BOYS. WE ALSO HAD A WEIRD CAT WALL HANGING.*

(like Bryan's inspired idea of telling adults that he was "collecting current U.S. coins.")

Saving money for something that cost more than \$5 or was made out of something other than cardboard? Whatever. We wanted the thrill of opening the pack; the curatorial authority of sorting the "good" from the "bad"; the naked idolatry of putting a Ken Griffey, Jr. rookie card in a "plastic" to display and adore and protect as if it were the key to our salvation; the prestige of having an awe-inspiring yet somehow never complete collection of Rickey Hendersons (Beau) or Darryl Strawberrys (Bryan).



For our younger selves, money was baseball cards. Actual dollars and cents were just the tools necessary to acquire our sacred currency: Topps, Fleer, Donruss, Score and Upper Deck (and later Stadium Club, Ultra, Bowman, Pinnacle and even Triple Play). Baseball was our religion, and baseball cards had photos of the hairy gods on the front and glorious hymns written in numeric code on the back. Bryan was convinced that if heaven really was a magical place in the sky, then surely there must be a mint condition Darryl Strawberry 1983 Topps Traded on every damn cloud.

Now this obsession may seem a little pathetic, but the joys of baseball card

collecting were true and plentiful. To this day we believe, without any proof whatsoever, that our collections helped build our unique identities and sense of selfhood, and that the design, photography, and graphics on cards helped foster an aesthetic sensibility that led to our lifelong interest in art. Or something like that.

But our obsession also carried with it two unfortunate by-products. First, it taught us that saving money was just plain stupid, because we wanted new cards every damn week. Secondly, we became straight-up hoarders, with boxes and binders of cards filling our closets and the space under the bunk bed and most of the floor of our shared bedroom, the majority of which were the bad cards, or "commons," sorted away from the charmed and magnificent good ones which went straight into plastics and binders.

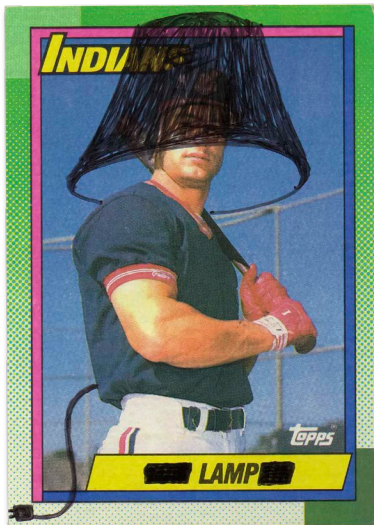
Unfortunately there was nothing that could be done about our practiced aversion to saving money (it's still very much with us). We were able, however, to put that massive supply of common cards to creative use during the countless unsupervised hours that kids with working, divorced parents are given. Inspired by the Fun Cards submissions published in the Beckett price guides, we picked up our Sharpies and started scribbling crude jokes all over our most pathetic cards

in endless attempts at entertaining one another. We drew fart clouds, ginormous penises, caricatures of TV stars, players screaming cuss words, gruesome injuries . . . the predictable silliness that rattles in the mind of young smartasses poured out of our Sharpies onto our most pathetic cards. Whatever this hobby was, we did it frequently and competitively enough that we got pretty good at it. And since our only audience was each other, we quickly developed a sort of shared comedic language that stayed with us and (thankfully) evolved as we got older.

And thus the seeds were planted. During those lazy afternoons of sitting around submerged in stacks of worthless cards and permanent markers, with *Saved by the Bell* or *Family Matters* flickering noisy nonsense in the background, with the Ken Griffey, Jr.'s and Frank Thomas's safely sheathed in plastic and carefully situated in their Right Place, and with absolutely nothing else to do, two brothers with no prior criminal records became Baseball Card Vandals.

Well, kinda. That's not the whole story. There's a big gap, after all, between two kids killing time after school drawing on their Dickie Thons and Don Aases, and two grown men running a business selling marked-up commons. How'd we get from there to here?





OUR FIRST BIG TUMBLR HITS, "LAMP" AND "I IRON EACH OUTFIT."

As we "matured" into "adults with real jobs," we had some ideas for creative projects we wanted to work on together. Our main focus was creating a T-shirt brand. We wanted to take our love and knowledge of baseball, mix it with our artistic sensibilities, and create a line of unlicensed MLB shirts that were cooler than anything else on the market. We spent a few months working on designs, drawing our favorite players, and conceptualizing weird team logos and apparel. Once we had a decent idea of our plan, we took a week of vacation from work to finalize designs.

Of course, each night after the "serious" work of disrupting the T-shirt industry was completed, we sat around until 4 a.m. drawing on cards. And by the end of the week, we had a six inch tall stack of defaced '86, '87, and '90 Topps with a few Score, Donruss and Fleer cards shuffled in. They were pretty damn funny, and unlike the still-imaginary T-shirts, they were done. To create an apparel company, we still needed a bunch of money, an e-commerce site, an ownable look and feel—there was a long way to go. But these cards were finished, they were funny, they

were nostalgic, crude, hand-drawn—exactly our aesthetic. So one night in late November, we decided to start a Tumblr, mostly for the instant gratification of seeing our ridiculous drawings up on the internet. At the very least, it would be something to play around with while we got our shirt shit together.

We uploaded the first card, "Hungover," a very primitive BCV piece that relies almost entirely on the player's miserable facial expression and profuse sweating. We called the blog Baseball Card Vandals and decided to post two cards a day, one drawn by each of us. It wasn't perfect, but it was ours. And for better or worse it was now live for the whole Internet to see.

Shockingly, our weird artwork immediately found an eager audience. And in the years since we launched, we've continued to draw, post, and (eventually) sell completely bonkers cards every single day—over 4,000 published to date. It's a true labor of love and at this point we honestly just don't know how to stop.

As the Baseball Card Vandals on the Internet, we hope to make you smile a few times a day. This book was put together with that same spirit. If you're already a BCV fan, first of all, we love you. Thanks for helping us finally do something with our lives for once in our, um, lives. We hope you enjoy this collection of old hits and new cards created exclusively for the book.

And if you're not a fan of BCV . . . we apologize in advance for what you're about to see.

