

# ShowCircuit

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## Tristar's Houston show deemed a success

BY ROSS FORMAN

The 2005 card show circuit resumed its positive roll, picking up right where it left off in 2004. Whether it was the *Chicago Sun-Times* show last November which was, arguably, the best show of the year, or Tristar Productions' New England area show last December, the circuit continues to gain momentum and Tristar's Houston show in January was no exception.

Tristar's annual Houston show held at the George R. Brown Convention Center in January, attracted more than 5,000 collectors and was perceived as a success by the majority in attendance,

"I never thought New England would be beat in terms of sales, but this Houston show at least tied it, and might have beat New England," said unopened box dealer Jack Hegwood of J&J Sports Cards (Rock Spring, Ga.)

The Houston show's incredible autograph lineup featured greats such as Joe Montana, Julius Erving Dick Butkus, Lawrence Taylor, Harmon Killebrew, Joe Morgan, Tony Perez, Robin Roberts and Earl Campbell. There were also several local celebrities, such as Brandon Backe and Brad Lidge of the Astros, in addition to University of Texas legends James Street, Huston Street and Randy Peschel, among others.

"It was an incredible show. The response to the autograph guests was unbelievable," said Tristar president Jeff Rosenberg. "This was a wonderful show. I heard great things from so many of the dealers."

"This was one of our best shows. In fact, for our January Houston show, this was the best in four or five years, based on attendance and autograph sales. This show exceeded all of my pre-show expectations."

Also signing autographs at the show were Derrick Armstrong, Alvin Harper, Homer Bailey, Pete Rose, Steve Carlton, Jim Rice, George Foster, Ozzie Smith, Kenny Burrough, Dwight Clark, Dennis

Rodman, Dante Hall, Julius Jones, Jason Bay, Cedric Benson, Roy Williams, Jason Witten and Derrick Johnson.

Emmitt Smith also was present, watching the autograph area in an effort to improve his WeTrak authentication service. Smith did not sign autographs, but did pose for some pictures.

"There was a little of everything at this show, with something for everyone and that's something we try to do at all our shows," Rosenberg said. "There were free autographs, mid-priced autograph and superstar-priced autographs. There also were University of Texas legendary alumni, Baseball Hall of Famers and more.

"We scaled back on bringing some of the bigger-named celebrities to shows for part of 2004, but the public spoke and said they were willing to pay for them. So that's what we're doing."

Montana autographs ranged from \$135 to \$160, plus \$95 per inscription. Dr. J autographs ranged from \$125 to \$150.

There were seven free autograph guests available at the show.

"We want the whole family to be able to come to a show," said Rosenberg.

The show also featured the Tristar Collectors Corner Evaluations' Booth, where Rosenberg spotted a Babe Ruth single-signed baseball from 1947, along with Elvis items.

"I worked my tail off at this show," Hegwood said. "I thought it might be a good show, but I didn't really anticipate it'd be this great of a show. Joe Montana drew a great crowd. I think I underestimated how could this show could be and was. Everything was selling. I could have sold anything and everything because the stuff was flying off the table."

Among the hot sellers were: Upper Deck Yankee Classic (\$89); All 2004 football releases, ranging from \$59 to \$209 per pack; Upper Deck SP Authentic (\$145), Playoff Contenders (\$145) and Prime Signatures (\$68) and mini helmets.

### REVIEW



Joe Montana



Dick Butkus



Julius Erving



Dane Jenkins (far left) and Jeff Rosenberg (far right) present Reeni Healey-DeFilippo and Carl Kahn with Tristar's 2004 Starry Award which recognizes the top show dealer.

## Reeni's Sports Collectibles nabs 2004 Starry Award

The 9th annual Starry Award, which recognizes Tristar Productions' Show Dealer of the Year, was awarded to Reeni's Sports Collectibles of Hillsborough, N.J. for 2004.

Partners Reeni Healey-DeFilippo and Carl Kahn sold their high-quality memorabilia, especially vintage autographs, at 35 shows in 2004 driving about 150,000 miles in a 1999 Suburban that has passed the 300,000 mile-mark.

"It's a great honor, especially since my colleagues voted for us. That makes it even more special. We really appreciate the recognition, the honor of this award," Healey-DeFilippo said. "There are so many other dealers who could have received this Starry Award, so we're really pleased that we were chosen."

"It's harder and harder every year, in a recession period, to stay afloat with quality items. But we're committed and the customers are committed to us too, otherwise we wouldn't be here. So, yeah, it was a good year for us."

Healey-DeFilippo said 2004 "definitely was tougher" than past years on the memorabilia front. "But, if you have quality merchandise and present it in a quality fashion, it pays off," she added.

Healey-DeFilippo said Houston and Chicago were the best show markets in 2004.

"We're known for certain athletes because those are the athletes who I did the most signings with, namely Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle," she said. "The Mantle market is the strongest it's ever been. It's on such an upswing. The pricing of Mantle memorabilia is incredible."

In January 2004, for instance, a Mantle-signed New York Yankees jersey sold for about \$2,500. Now, they are about \$4,500. Mantle-signed baseballs, meanwhile, were \$300-\$400 a year ago. Now they are \$600-\$700, more for Upper Deck baseballs, she said.

Healey-DeFilippo also noted a "significant increase" last year in Ted Williams items.

"I think the authenticity services have helped tremendously to clean up the industry," she said. "I'm not saying the industry is completely clean, but they have really helped. I think the customers are starting to realize for sure that, if an offer is too good to be true, it probably is. I really endorse the authentication services. I think they are a tremendous asset to this industry." ♦

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## HIGHLIGHTED SHOWS

**Feb. 18-20** - Tristar Collectors Show, Cow Palace, San Antonio, Texas.  
**Feb. 20** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, American Legion, Tauton, Maine.  
**Feb. 27-March 3** - Hawaii Trade Conference, Renaissance Ilikai Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii.  
**March 4-6** - EPSCC, Fort Washington Expo Center, Fort Washington, Pa.  
**March 4-6** - Tristar Collectors Show, Phoenix Civic Plaza, Phoenix, Ariz.  
**March 4** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, Downtown Sports Card Shop, Tauton, Maine.  
**March 11-13** - Sun-Times Show, Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, Ill.  
**March 20** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, American Legion, Tauton, Maine.  
**March 26** - Ephrata Lions Club, Ephrata Recreation Center, Ephrata, Pa.  
**April 1-4** - Triumph Sports Inc., N.J. Convention Expo Center, Edison, N.J.  
**April 15-17** - Naxcom, Overland Park Convention Center, Overland Park, Kan.  
**April 17** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, American Legion, Tauton, Maine.  
**April 29-May 1** - EPSCC, Fort Washington Expo Center, Fort Washington, Pa.  
**May 15** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, American Legion, Tauton, Maine.  
**May 20-22** - Naxcom, Denver Airport Holiday Inn, Denver, Colo.  
**June 3** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, Downtown Sports Card Shop, Tauton, Maine.  
**June 3-5** - Sports Collectibles of Houston, Live Oak Civic Center, Houston, Texas.  
**June 3-5** - Tristar Collectors Summer Collectors Show, Royal Plaza Trade Center, Marlborough, Maine.  
**June 4-6** - WSSCA, Seattle Center Snowqualmie Room, Seattle, Wash.  
**June 9-11** - Hall of Fame Sports Collectibles, Hollywood Park Casino, Los Angeles, Calif.  
**June 12** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, American Legion, Tauton, Maine.  
**June 24-26** - SportsFest, Donald E. Stephens Conv. Center, Rosemont, Ill.  
**July 8-10** - Triumph Sports, Inc., N.J. Convention Expo Center, Edison, N.J.  
**July 8-10** - Collector's Showcase of America, Richmond International Raceway, Richmond, Va.  
**July 17** - Downtown Sports Card Shop Show, American Legion, Tauton, Maine.  
**July 22-24** - Tristar Collectors Show, Arlington Convention Center, Arlington, Texas.  
**July 27-31** - National Sports Collectors Convention, Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, Ill. ♦

"I could have sold 100 more, if I had brought them with me," Hegwood said.

"It was a great crowd, a big crowd, a spending crowd," Hegwood said. "There was an old saying in the industry that, when a big-name guest appears at a show, there is no money left to spend among the dealers. That saying doesn't hold water with me, especially after this show. If you have something they want, they're going to buy it."

Mike Williamson of Bryan's Collectibles (Raymore, Mo.) agreed that it was a spending crowd in Houston.

"These collectors here at this show knew what they wanted, and bought it," Williamson said.

Steve Rocchi, the president of Global Authentication Inc., praised the show, his first on the Tristar circuit. "It was a solid turnout of collectors," he said.

Global offered on-site authentication and was asked for its collective opinion on a Mel Ott single-signed baseball, a Jimmie Foxx single-signed baseball and a Honus Wagner cut signature, among other relics.

Rocchi said there were large quantities of common cards the 1950s and 1960s that were brought in for grading, along with a large run of unopened packs dating back to the early 1950s. There also were a variety of unopened 1970s cello packs.

In all, Global evaluated about 3,500 items in Houston.

"We did better than expected at the show," Rocchi said.

Vintage St. Louis-based dealer Bill Goodwin said the attendance was "great" and the sales of commons were "solid."

Vintage dealer Paul Sjolín of Spring, Texas, said the hottest baseball years of his Houston sales were 1961-64. He said football cards were only 10 percent of his sales.

"Overall, this was a very good show," Sjolín said.

Added autograph dealer Justin Morrill of The Jersey Source, "This show was better than anticipated, perhaps because of the strong autograph lineup."

Morrill's top-selling autographed jerseys were: Earl Campbell, with four inscriptions (\$139); Ben Roethlisberger (\$219) and Willie Mays (\$239), while Morrill's top-selling helmets were: Earl Campbell (\$130); Jim Brown (\$179-259) and Gale Sayers (\$149).

Houston-based Tristar will be in Phoenix on March 4-6, with the first card show appearance by Ryne Sandberg since his induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Also scheduled to appear at the Phoenix Civic Plaza are: Steve Carlton, Billy Williams, Don Sutton, George Foster, several top baseball prospects and members of the Phoenix Suns, such as Quentin Richardson, Casey Jacobsen and Leandro Barbosa, among others. ♦

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Dennis Rodman

## Collector digs up Mantle Treasure

Late last year, during one of his regular trips to his favorite area card show (Tulsa Gold & Coin), Richard Ferguson bought the last available pack of Tristar Hidden Treasures baseball cards.

He took it home and put it on the coffee table, knowing the \$10 pack contained one Beckett graded "9" or "10" card. Well, most of them do.

Ferguson's pack, instead, had a redemption certificate for one of the product's Grand Treasures: a 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle card, graded 5, and valued at \$18,000.

"I was extremely shocked when I opened the pack," said Ferguson, 45, a divorced father of three. "In fact, I had to look at it several times just to make sure I was seeing what I thought I was seeing."



Tristar president Jeff Rosenberg and Richard Ferguson

Ferguson returned to the scene of the purchase, showed the redemption certificate to store owner Mike Oyster and the pair eventually contacted Tristar officials for verification.

On Jan. 23 at the Tristar Productions Houston Show, Ferguson was formally presented with the '52 Mantle.

"It's been overwhelming," he said. "It's extremely tempting to sell it and the money is needed, so I probably will sell it. But, I'd love to be able to keep it; that's a fact."

Ferguson mostly collects autographs, especially baseballs and oddball vintage memorabilia.

"I remember reading last year in *SCD* about another collector who won a Babe Ruth-signed ball through a pack of Hidden Treasures, and was thinking how lucky he was/is. Then I won mine and I know I too am lucky," Ferguson said.

Tristar Hidden Treasures contains a '52 Mantle card in every 36,000 packs.

"It was a thrill for me to be able to present the card, so I can just imagine how exciting it must be for Richard to win it," said Tristar president Jeff Rosenberg. ♦