

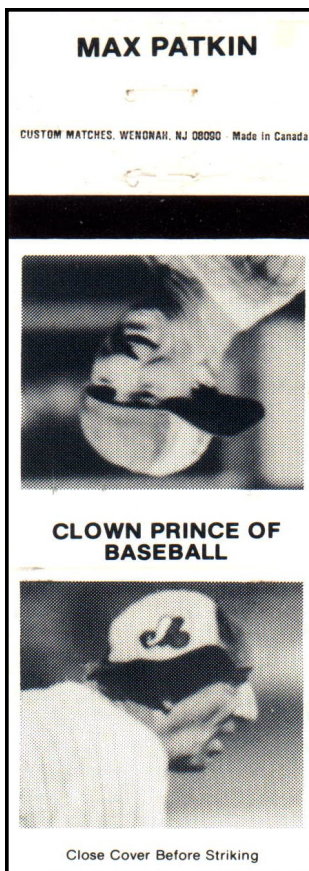
Max Patkin

Not being a sports fan, I had never heard of Max Patkin, but running across the cover below was enough to get my interest going. After a little research, it became pretty apparent that I had missed someone very special.

Max Patkin, to millions of Americans, is known simply as the "Clown Prince of Baseball". His appearance as an underfed scarecrow, with 185 pounds spread out over a 6'3" frame and his rubber-like face dominated by his nose, give Patkin the natural funny appearance of a true clown, which he has used to entertain millions of boys and girls, men and women in small towns and large cities across the country.

Each season, he appeared before more than two million fans in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and Mexico. As a comic, he did hitches with two American League teams, the Cleveland Indians and the St. Louis Browns before barnstorming across the country on his own. A graduate of and star player at West Philadelphia High School, Patkin, as a baseball comedian, was the successor to Al Schacht, the first person to mix comedy with baseball in the 1920s.

He entered professional baseball in 1941 with a farm team for the Chicago White Sox and did fairly well until he injured his pitching arm and was released in 1942. He began clowning around in lopsided games while in the service, catching the attention of Bill Veeck, who hired him as a comic coach to boost the attendance of the Cleveland Indians. When the Indians began to win and did not need Patkin to draw crowds, Veeck got him started with minor league ball clubs. Though Patkin always wanted to return to pitching, he was convinced by Joe DiMaggio among others to continue with his rubber-faced slapstick, which became a baseball tradition.



One of his most famous routines was to mimic the first baseman as he went through infield warm-ups. In 1993, Patkin fell on the dugout steps at Fenway Park and injured an ankle, snapping what he estimated to be a streak of more than 4,000 consecutive games over 50 years without missing an appearance. In March, Patkin made headlines when he was robbed on camera while filming a television special in downtown Philadelphia. Patkin helped ensure a lenient sentence by asking the judge to go easy on the man, who took \$35 from Patkin's hand and ran off. Patkin reached the pinnacle of his storied career and of his popularity with a guest appearance in the major motion picture *Bull Durham* in 1988.

He died in 1999 at the age of 79. Many fans remember Patkin handing out baseball cards of himself. Doctors said Patkin was handing out his cards from his hospital bed the night before he died. Many would agree that he was, indeed, one of a kind...the "Clown Prince of Baseball".

