

Sports Schedules

by
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Sports Schedules refers to those covers and boxes which have a team's upcoming game schedule for the season on them, although I don't believe I've ever actually seen a box which falls in this category. You don't often see Sports Schedules listed as a "wanted" category, but many collectors save them, and the really hard-core Sports enthusiasts are relentless in their pursuit of these gems.

Why? Well, aside from the fact that many male collectors ardently follow sports in general [*am I being sexist?*], these covers are historic in a dual sense. First, they chronicle people's favorite teams and sports, and, second, many or most are dated. Personally, all of my Sports interest is housed in the extreme tip of my left pinky, *but* I am very interested in Dated covers, because Dated means "documented," so I collect these, myself, although I don't separate them out from the rest of my Dated covers.

There are a variety of types, of course. They can be separated by the particular sport—the particular team—high school, collegiate, or professional—etc.; I have mine sorted by date. That's why I tend to think of these covers



as coming in two basic types: Dated and Undated. They're "Dated" if they bear the year; they're "Undated" if they if they don't, and it's always very frustrating to come across a Sports Schedule with no year printed on it. If you wish to do some detective work on these undated ones, it is possible to figure out the date on some of them by checking a reference on past calendar years to see which year matches up with the dates on the schedule, but you'd have to know on what days of the week the games were played, and the general age of the cover would give you a starting point.

Because of the space requirements to print a schedule, most are to be seen on the inside of these covers. Some of the covers give no indication that there's a schedule on the inside; others have the year or some other indication on the outside.

Generally, one's eyes tend to get proportionately bigger in direct relationship to the age of the particular cover, so one of the burning questions in this category always relates to just how far they go back in history....What IS the earliest Sports Schedule cover? The earliest one I've been able to come across is the one pictured on page 1...a very nice Illinois 1926-1927 Lion Safety First [courtesy of Marc Edelman, PA]. That's 71 years old, but we'll probably never know what the earliest such cover was. Even if a 1918 Sports Schedule cover surfaced, there would always be a chance that an earlier one existed.

And it is possible, because all of the popular, major team sports were underway by the turn of the century, just as the matchbook, itself, was making its first appearance. Baseball predates the Civil War; football's first intercollegiate match was Rutgers vs. Princeton in 1869; basketball's first professional game was in 1896; and hockey was going by then, as well. So, who knows? In some long-forgotten coffee can, in some dark corner of an attic or cellar, that first Sports Schedule cover may be waiting to be uncovered.

