

Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by [Nigel's Webspaces](http://www.nigelweb.com), a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

Dübreq, Stylophone and Top Trumps football cards

Brian Jarvis and Burt Coleman were repairing a child's toy piano when they happened to invent a new form of electronic musical instrument, which went on to become the now iconic Stylophone. The story is well told on a series of webpages accessed via <http://www.stylophone.ws>. In 1967 they submitted a patent for their new form of musical instrument, with the complete specification published in August 1969.

Along with Burt Coleman's brother Ted the trio formed a company called Dübreq, since their expertise was in the dubbing and recording fields. From their earliest days they recruited Rolf Harris as 'the face of Stylophone'. The early sales were available only through mail order, at a cost of £8 18s and 6d (today the equivalent £100).

Although it was an instant and amazing hit, not everyone is convinced of its merits. This website notes that it was 'marketed as a "pocket electronic organ" that anyone could play with no musical training, it used a stylus to play the notes - you touched the metal 'keyboard' with the stylus to complete a circuit and a note was triggered. It sounded truly awful! A horrible, buzzy pulse wave through a small cheap speaker that sounded like a very butch wasp on steroids! There was no volume control either and the only way to turn the annoying sound down was to place your hand over the speaker. Given that it became a popular children's toy, parents must have been driven demented by the whining, nasal warbling reverberating around their houses and I am sure that many mums and dads at the time had wished they'd spent a bit more on a Chopper bike instead!' (<http://www.hollowsun.com/hs2/products/stylo/index.htm>).

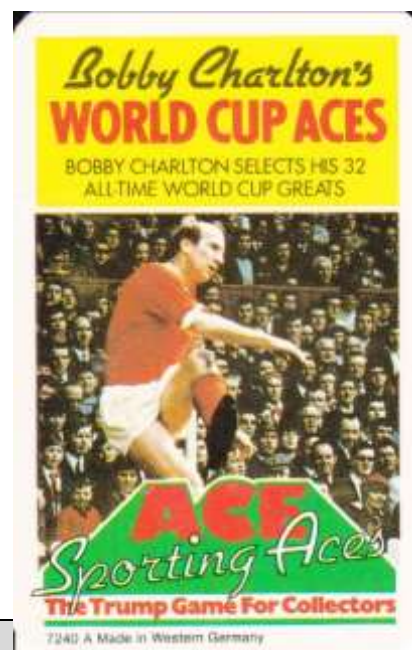


I can confirm this view, as my family bought one and I remember it being a prized possession at the time, though not too much came out of it in the way of good music. I just remember it being a novelty, something to show to friends and visitors. The sound quality was appalling, and you only ever play single notes, no chords. How it ever caught on defies logic, but it was obviously very successful marketing. I have no idea what happened to our Stylophone, but it might well still be in a family store somewhere.

Manufacturing of the Stylophone ended in 1975, after well over a million units had been sold, as the product's time in the sun had passed. The Dübreq company closed in 1980, ending a brief but eventful 13 year history.

Top Trumps is a card game which appears to date from the mid 1970s, a couple of years after Dübreq ceased production of the Stylophone. The idea is that each card in a set includes numerical information on a number of dimensions which can be used to 'trump' a card of another player e.g. in a football game – international appearances, goals etc. According to this website -

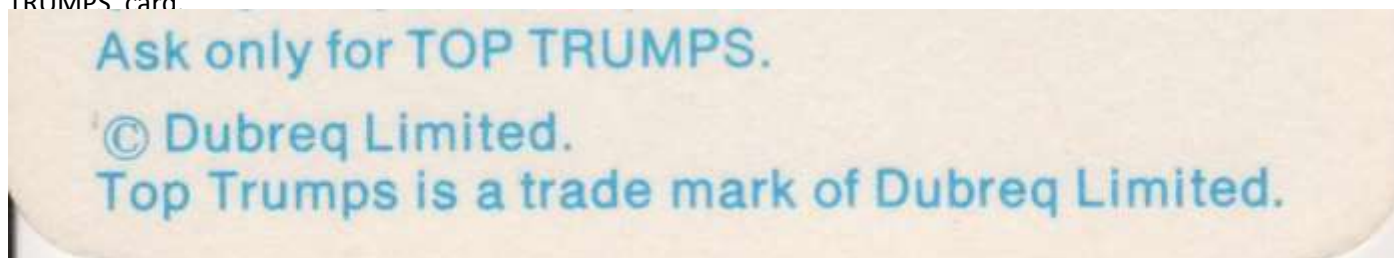
http://www.ultimate-top-trumps.co.uk/game_rules.htm - the Altenburg-Stralsunder company from Germany released a brand of trump cards in 1976 under the name 'Ace', which would coincide with a 1977/78 issue of English cards named Bobby Charlton's World Cup Aces (http://cards.littleoak.com.au/index_ace.html) which was released in the UK by Wiggins Teape of Brentwood, but the cards are clearly marked as being made in Western Germany.



Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by [Nigel's Webspaces](http://nigel'swebsites.com), a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

However, it was the Dubreq company which claims to have introduced the name 'Top Trumps', and which trademarked the name on their 1978/79 Top Trumps issues for a number of subjects, including football. The company name didn't feature prominently on the cards, but did appear in some sets on the 'How to play TOP TRUMPS' card



My website's Dubreq page (http://cards.littleoak.com.au/index_dubreq.html) includes a number of football Top Trumps sets of 32 cards, and includes some team-specific updates issued around 1980, the same time as Dubreq ending their company life.

So the big question in this whole story is how three men with a background in dubbing and recording music came to be associated with Rolf Harris to create a new musical instrument and a company which at one stage employed over 100 people, only to see the Stylophone diminish and fade away. And then less than three years later the same company trademarked a card game concept called Top Trumps and produced some interesting and now collectible football cards, only to then fade away again after a brief flourish.

Golden Wonder



According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Wonder) Golden Wonder is a British company that manufactures snack foods, most notably crisps. The company was founded in 1947 and named after the Golden Wonder potato, a late maincrop russet skinned variety. In 2006 the company went into administration, though they were subsequently bought out by the Tayto Group.

In 1977/78 Golden Wonder produced two interesting sets of football cards – a set of 24 Soccer All Stars and a set of 36 World Cup All Stars. Mark very kindly sent me the packet images in this story. The one to the right shows the packet for the Soccer All Stars. The cards have nice crisp (if you'll pardon the pun) images and are different from the prevailing styles of football cards of the time so are an interesting set to collect. You can view the gallery of all 24 cards on my website here -



http://cards.littleoak.com.au/197778_golden_wonder_all_stars/197778_golden_wonder_all_stars.html.

It is interesting to note Golden Wonder's marketing approach here. The crisps themselves are called All Stars, and are available in Crispy Bacon (orange pack) and Salt 'n' Vinegar (blue pack) flavours. Mark sent me the brilliant advertising poster which confirms that you received a free picture card in every pack.

Nigel's Webspaces News

A newsletter distributed by Nigel's Webspaces, a website dedicated to the history of English football cards 1965/66 to 1979/80.

The cards could be stuck into an album, seen below:



Golden Wonder then produced a set of 36 World Cup All Stars for the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, using the same style as the British All Stars. Mark has managed to find both packets, with their original 7p price tags intact.

Again these cards could be stuck into an album available from Golden Wonder. Interestingly, these cards are not particularly collectible, and therefore not sought after or valuable, a real pity as they were excellent images and good quality albums. Golden Wonder didn't repeat the football sets after this, so perhaps they were not a success at the time.



A gallery of the World Cup All Stars is available here -

http://cards.littleoak.com.au/197778_golden_wonder_world_cup/197778_golden_wonder_world_cup_index.html.



Mark has dug up another production from Golden Wonder, which may indicate the direction their marketing department thought they should go. Dated 1978, Golden Wonder produced a set called Sporting All Stars, perhaps attempting to widen their appeal. Mark suggests that there is only a single footballer in the set – Kevin Keegan.

If you know more about Golden Wonder, please be in touch via the website.



Until next time...**Nigel**