

ANOTHER WORLD

Dave Silver and Adam Martin have a 35,000-square-foot warehouse with millions of cards at their disposal, but that's only the beginning.

BY KEVIN HAAKE

If one were to craft a list detailing the seven wonders of the collecting world, there is little doubt that Dave and Adam's Card World would be in the discussion.

Located just outside of Buffalo, N.Y., Dave and Adam's Card World hasn't always been the card Mecca that stands so majestically today. In fact, Adam and Dave's *Hockey World* started like most great American enterprises, with humble and meager beginnings.

"I first met Dave in the summer of 1988 in Rochester, N.Y.," Adam Martin recalls. "We were by far the youngest exhibitors on the card show circuit at the time so we tended to gravitate towards one another. In 1989 Pierre Turgeon, Dave Andreychuk, Daren Puppa and other Buffalo Sabres were getting hot, but back then there were no easy ways to acquire large volumes of Rookie Cards, so I suggested to Dave that we start running classified ads in select trade publications."

"Of course, Dave was on board, but there was one problem, what would we call the business? Since I was still living at home, and it was my phone number that was in the ad, I suggested that we call the busi-

ness Adam and Dave's Hockey World. I even had my mom trained to answer the phone so that when I wasn't there, she would tell the customers that Dave and I were off breaking cases of 1979-80 vending."

So how did Adam and Dave's Hockey World end up as Dave and Adam's Card World?

"One day, Dave came to me and said 'you know, I think that I'd like to run my phone number in the ads too.'" Martin said. "I told him that we couldn't run two phone numbers because it might be confusing to our customers. At the time, we were also aggressively buying Jim Kelly rookies and other Buffalo Bills, so Adam and Dave's Hockey World didn't truly represent the full scope of our growing business. So we compromised, I got to keep my number running in the classified ads but the business name would change to Dave and Adam's Card World ... 19 years later, I guess you can say it worked out OK."

Not surprisingly, Martin still remembers how much that first classified ad cost.



"The invoice we received was for \$37, but it was that ad that got us off and running," he says.

Since that inaugural ad, Dave and Adam's Card World has steadily grown into one of the industry's most influential and significant power brokers.

Martin and Silver were aided in their ascension to the top of the hobby when they caught a break in 1991.

"The Northland Hockey Stick Company had just gone out of business" Martin recalls. "The way the company conducted business was that they had players send them actual sticks that were game-used, curved, shaped, shaved and altered so that they could make the player's new sticks identical to their exact specifications. A person associated with the company had access to this incredible library that housed hundreds of game-used hockey sticks from as far back as the early 1960s. He brought them all up from Massachusetts, to Buffalo, and opened a small warehouse within a mile of Dave and I. We literally spent every nickel we had buying as many game-used Bobby Orr, Gordie Howe and Bobby Hull hockey sticks as we could afford. That was a very significant purchase for us because it was very early on and it provided us with some much-needed cash flow."

The buy was so successful that it allowed Martin and Silver to more aggressively pursue larger wax purchases.

"Our first retail store was a 500 square-foot facility," Martin recalls. "Since then, we've expanded five times and now operate two hobby stores in the Buffalo area along with our 35,000-square-foot warehouse and individual buying facility."

In order to run an operation of that magnitude, Martin employs a full-time staff of 70 that consists of a seven-person buying team, a three-person information technology team and a full-scale marketing division.

"I'd like to think that we're the only trading card retailer in the industry with all of those departments in-house," Martin says.

Last year, Dave and Adam's spent in excess of \$21 million on trading cards.

"We consider ourselves the No. 1 seller of trading cards in the world behind Wal-Mart and Target," Martin says. "We have shipped as

many as 2,000 packages in a single day."

The company's mission statement? To maintain the absolute most varied inventory at the best possible prices.

"We specialize in unopened wax from the last two years, but our inventory goes back decades, all the way into the 1950s," Martin says. "A big deal for us could be a \$1 million dollar wax purchase. Right now

we've got somewhere in the neighborhood of more than a quarter-million boxes of unopened cards in stock. To put that in perspective, that's over 1,000 skids of cards or 55 full 18-wheelers."

There is little doubt in Martin's mind which products and sports move collector's needles.

"We sell more baseball than anything," Martin states. "Football

is a definite second followed by Hockey and Basketball deadlocked at third. Our biggest moving products of the year are Bowman Chrome baseball and SP Legendary Cuts, hands down. When those products get set to release, we experience two of our busiest times of the year"

For those collectors who can't make the pilgrimage to Buffalo,

Dave and Adam's website is always open. Since its inception in October 2001, dacardworld.com has served more than 100,000 unique clients and tallies more than 60,000 hits per week.

"With more than 300,000 items available on dacardworld.com, the choices that are available for all collectors are second to none," Martin says.

When reflecting on

the company's success, Martin will tell you that he often thinks about the early days.

"Believe it or not, I was planning on being a lawyer until all of this craziness happened," he says.

Craziness indeed, and a story of entrepreneurial, and hobby, success that is out of this world.



Top: Adam Martin (left) and Dave Silver (right) pose with Buffalo native Patrick Kane (middle).



Left: Adam Martin (left) poses with Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson.

