

# CARDS STACKED AGAINST PARENTS

Yu-Gi-Oh! takes over from Pokemon in plucking parents' pocketbooks

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

Here Yu-Gi-Oh! again. First there was the Pokemon craze — trading cards, TV show, Gameboy games. Then came Digimon, a whole new digital way to drain your wallet. Now, for parents who have already shelled out hundreds of dollars for their children's current card collections and games, there's a new fad.

It's Yu-Gi-Oh! and it's big. Bigger than anything that has come before, according to one Markham dealer.

"I get 100 kids a day in the store, easy, more on the weekends," all demanding the latest Yu-Gi-Oh! starter decks and booster packs, explained Brian Duquette, Yu-Gi-Oh! dealer and owner of Variety in the McDonald's plaza at McCowan Road and 14th Avenue.

"From now until Christmas, this will be the biggest thing," he predicted. "I try to watch and see what's happening out there. I don't make the bandwagon, but if one goes by, I'll hop on."

Yu-Gi-Oh! has become more popular than Pokemon because it appeals to a broader age range — six to 15.

It's like a combination of Pokemon and the knights of armour game, Magic. The battles are intense, the characters large as life and the kids love it.

"Winning a duel is my favourite part," said Cody Day, 11.

"You need a good strategy and you need good cards."

His duelling partner for this day, Cody Wells, 9, likes to collect the rare cards, ones with names like Seiyaryu and Blue Eyes White Dragon and Exodia.

Exodia is the ultimate card, said Cody Wells, because it's actually five cards representing different parts of the body to make up one strong opponent.

"If you have all five in your hand at the same time it's an automatic win," he said.

Each card has attack points and defence points. If your card doesn't have enough points to

defend your opponents' attack, you're gone. To the graveyard.

The Gameboy game plays along the same lines. You battle other duellers who are playing their cards.

"It's really good," said Cody W. "I play it all the time and my friends and cousins all play it, too. It's pretty fun, way better than Pokemon."

*'It's the hot new collectible and everyone wants it. Over the last three or four months, sales have tripled. For a small store like mine, that means it's hot. Yu-Gi-Oh! is it.'*

Yu-Gi-Oh! was invented in Japan in 1996 by Kazuki Takahashi.

A boy called Yugi finds an Egyptian artifact called the millennium puzzle.

It's supposed to be unsolvable, but Yugi unlocks it and the result is the creation of an alter ego chosen to protect the world.

Yugi and his friends play a card game called Duel Monsters, but Yugi doesn't realize the game has evolved from a 5,000-year-old game that, at one point, threatened to destroy the world.

Mr. Duquette said the marketing behind the craze is top-notch. For example, releasing five million cards when the worldwide demand is 100 million.

"They keep the cards in short supply and that just fuels the flame," he said.

There are two series available — the Legend of Blue Eyes White Dragon and the Metal Raiders. The third is due out mid-August, he said.

"When no one else has stock, I order from the United States and the United Kingdom," Mr. Duquette said.

"Having stock consistently makes a big difference; the phone rings off the hook with kids calling to see what we have."

He sells starter decks — with 50 cards, a cheaper way to go than booster packs — for \$22.99.

Limited edition booster packs go for \$8.99, while regular boosters, nine cards each, sell for \$5.99.

Every retailer sets his own price — Petro Canada stations have Yu-Gi-Oh! booster packs for \$4.99.

Mr. Duquette has just returned from a stock-buying trip to Buffalo in preparation for the Canadian National Exhibition at the end of the month in Toronto.

He has \$50,000 worth of Yu-Gi-Oh! cards ready for what he's certain will be massive demand.

"It's the hot new collectible and everyone wants it," he said.

"Over the last three or four months, sales have tripled."

"For a small store like mine, that means it's hot. Yu-Gi-Oh! is it."

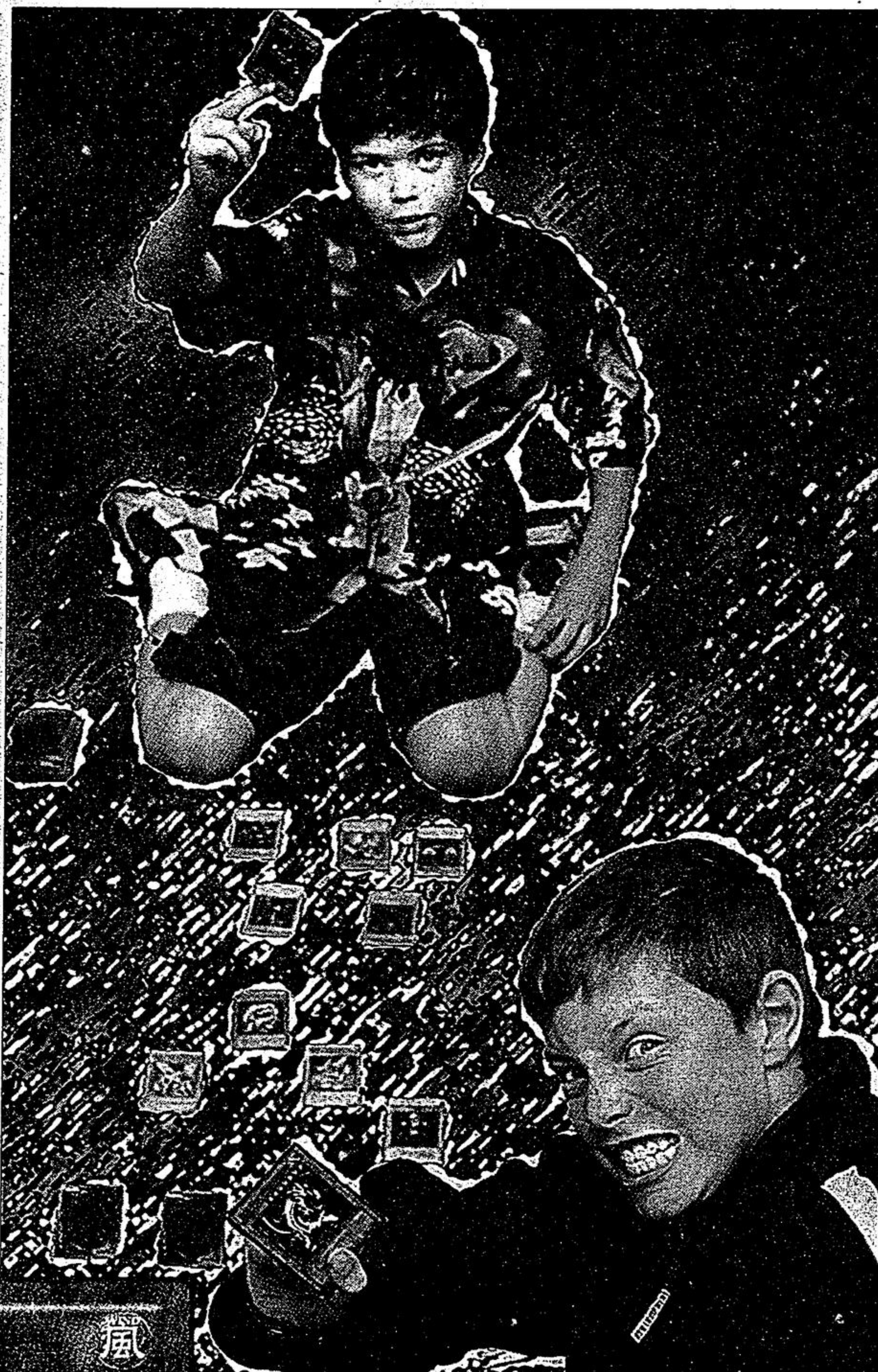


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

**DUELLING CODYS:** Cody Wells, 9 (above, bottom), and Cody Day, 11, duel in Yu-Gi-Oh!, a game of strategy that originated in Japan and, unfortunately for parents' wallets, has moved to this side of the ocean. The game involves battling each other's card monsters (left).





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