

JANUARY 2008 "COLLECTING WITH JEFF" JEFF FIGLER

**Question: #1**

Which has more value, a single-signed baseball or one that is signed by two or more players? Tom S. Wichita Falls, Tx.

ANSWER: Personally I prefer a single-signed ball, especially if you are a collector of memorabilia of only that one player. There are new ways to remove unwanted signatures, but I am against that idea.

**Question: #2**

Does having an inscription on a baseball such as "Dear?" increase the value of the ball? Dan C. Fairfield, Ct.

ANSWER: I do not think it increases the value of the item. I do not like inscriptions and try not to collect baseballs which have them, especially if my name is not in the inscription. Inscriptions only mean something to the person that the ball was signed for. However, if that is the only way to get a ball, then go for it.

## THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Question: Who was the first athlete to be named an All-Star in two major sports?

Answer: Becoming an All-Star in a major sport is extremely difficult. To be an All-Star in two major sports is unheard of. However, take the case of Vincent ("Bo") Jackson.

Bo Jackson was born on November 30, 1962 in Bessemer, Alabama. He was named after Vince Edwards, his mother's favorite actor. His family would describe him as a "wild boar", which was shortened to "Bo". At Mc Adory High School he was a star in both football and baseball. In June 1982 the New York Yankees selected him in the second round of the Major League Baseball draft, but instead, he chose to attend Auburn University on a football scholarship. At Auburn he would play both football and baseball, and starred in both.

Jackson was drafted first overall in the 1986 NFL draft by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. However, because Jackson wanted to be a professional baseball player he rejected Tampa Bay's five-year offer. Since he did not sign with a team by the 1987 draft, Tampa Bay forfeited his right, and his name went back in the draft. The Oakland Raiders selected Jackson in the 7<sup>th</sup> round of the 1987 draft, and Raiders ownership supported Jackson playing both sports, and allowed him to join the Raiders midway through the 1987 season.

Jackson was a star with the Raiders for four seasons, even though he played second-string to

Marcus Allen. However, it was during a 1990 Raiders playoff game against the Cincinnati Bengals that Jackson suffered a serious hip injury which ended his football career and seriously threatened his baseball career.

In the meantime, after signing with the Kansas City Royals he played his first major league game on September 2, 1986. He played major league baseball for Kansas City from 1986-1990, the Chicago White Sox in 1991 and 1993, and the California Angels in 1994.

Bo Jackson was the first athlete to be named an all-star in two major sports, having done so in football in 1990, and baseball in 1989. He is in the College Football Hall of Fame.

In 1989 and 1990 Jackson's name became nationally known through the "Bo knows" advertising campaign by Nike, promoting a cross-training shoe named for Jackson.



## **THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY**

Question: Which U.S. President started the baseball traditions of throwing out the first ball on opening day, and the seventh inning stretch?

Answer: U.S. Presidents have always had a love affair with America's pastime, baseball. It might have been only a myth, but Abraham Lincoln was said to have played the sport. Andrew Jackson was a fan of the game and watched games in Washington. He even invited teams to the White House. Presidents Grant, Arthur, and Cleveland were big fans as well.

On June 6, 1892 Benjamin Harrison was the first U.S. President to attend a major league game, when he witnessed Cincinnati defeat Washington 7-4 in 11 innings.

However, it was a later President, William Howard Taft who forever earned his way into the hearts of baseball fans by introducing two of the most cherished and beloved traditions of all time.

On April 14, 1910, President Taft threw out the first pitch to open the major league baseball season. Opening game that year was a real classic. Washington Senators ace Walter Johnson pitched the first of his thirteen opening day starts, and in the 1910 opener he shut out the Philadelphia Athletics 3-1 on one hit. The one hit was a double that Frank "Home Run" Baker hit, when Senators right fielder Doc Gessler backed up to catch the ball and tripped over the feet of a fan. Oddly enough, in that same game, Baker hit a foul ball that glanced off the head of the Secretary of the Senate Charles G. Bennett. However, William Howard Taft was not finished on that day. Legend has it that Taft, all six-foot-two and 300 pounds, grew uncomfortable by the middle of the seventh inning, and stood up and stretched. That was the beginning of the popular seventh inning stretch.

In that same 1910 year, Taft became the only President to see games in each major league on the same day. It happened on May 4, 1910, in St. Louis, when he saw the National League Cardinals and the American League Browns play.

Interestingly enough, 1910 saw the start of yet another baseball tradition. Jack Norworth's song

"Take Me Out to the Ballgame," was introduced, even though Norworth himself would not go to his first game until years later.

Other Presidents were huge fans of baseball, including Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and both President Bushes'.

Harding, in fact, owned a piece of a minor league team, and George W. Bush owned the Texas Rangers. Eisenhower even played professional baseball under an assumed name.

Ironically, it was President Truman who attended more games than any other President, and threw out baseballs both left-handed and right-handed.

Despite busy schedules Presidents always make time for baseball.

