

November 2009 "COLLECTING WITH JEFF"  
by JEFF FIGLER

Jeff is a very entertaining speaker and writer. He is available to talk to your group on collecting, as well as write for your magazine or newsletter.

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### **MOST COLLECTIBLE CURRENT ATHLETES (Part 1)**

Congratulations, despite what some naysayers predict about the economy, you have decided to continue collecting sports memorabilia. You promise to be a bit more prudent and selective, and now you want some sagely advice. Well, I am here to help guide you. Keep on reading, and I will be as objective as humanly possible.

Let me share with you my thoughts as to which current athlete is the most collectible in professional baseball, basketball, and football. Next month I will visit hockey, golf, and car racing.

To avoid showing my bias, I will alphabetically take up the sports of baseball, basketball, and football. So let's start with baseball.

My short list of collectible "stars" for the past half dozen or so years consists of Ryan Howard, Derek Jeter, Albert Pujols, and Alex Rodriguez. My pick as the most collectible current athlete, as well as whose collectible value has the most potential, is Albert Pujols of the St. Louis Cardinals. His statistics for the first nine years of his illustrious career compare favorably with the greatest of any player in baseball history. Experts predict that Pujols could become the greatest right-handed batter of all time, with Ted Williams holding that distinction for left-handed swingers.

Unquestionably, jump on the opportunity to own any Pujols item, preferably ones he has signed. Signed game-used jerseys that now go for over \$8000 will shortly go for double that amount. Likewise, signed game-used bats have gone for up to \$4700. A signed official Major League baseball is worth \$350-450 now, and rising. Upper Deck has exclusive signing rights with Pujols, but that doesn't preclude you from getting a Pujols item through an auction, even online.

You will be glad that you put Albert Pujols on your wish list. Sure, if you're a Yankee fan, you may be saying that your heart tells you to collect Derek Jeter, the all-time Yankee hit leader. Or an Alex Rodriguez, or even a Mariano Rivera. But this time let your head prevail -- collect Albert Pujols first. Don't worry. You won't have to face Pujols' Cardinals until a World Series.

Well, next up is professional basketball. On my short list of the most collectible current players, are Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, and Dwayne Wade. Yes, I am omitting Tim Duncan, Dirk Nowitzki, Dwight Howard, Steve Nash, and even the fun-loving friendly giant himself, Shaquille O'Neal. Okay, suspense over -- my choice is LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers. Despite playing in a mid-size market (Cleveland) rather than in a mega media market such as New York, our man, LeBron, has started to develop a fan base around the globe, ala Michael Jordan. You can make a sound argument that Mr. Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers has also developed a comparable fan base, and Bryant has even been on championship teams to boot, but James hasn't had to contend with the court of public opinion for his off-court escapades.

The meteoric rise of James' collectibles has already been witnessed. A James game-used signed jersey has been auctioned for over \$6500. His signed shoes have gone for over \$6000. And this guy plays in Cleveland. At least Michael Jordan perfected his professional craft in Chicago for most of his playing days. I would be remiss not to mention that Dwayne Wade of Miami, and Dwight Howard of Orlando are also highly collectible professional basketball players, whose items are quickly rising in value as well.

But for now, and for the many years that LeBron James will delight and bring enjoyment to global basketball patrons, he is incomparable, and is not called "The King" for nothing. And he doesn't even make New York his home base -- yet.

And that brings us to our final sport for this piece of writing. You got it, football, the newly anointed most popular sport in America. So who is on my list of the most collectible current professional gridiron performers? Let's include the usual suspects first, Peyton Manning of the Indianapolis Colts, and Tom Brady of the New England Patriots. Add to it a lot of seasoning with LaDainian Tomlinson of the San Diego Chargers and Brett Favre, now of the Minnesota Vikings. Yes, I was tempted to say that Favre was still on the Green Bay Packers. And add one more current player, Adrian Peterson, Favre's teammate at Minnesota. Peterson may indeed be the most exciting player in the game today, but he has not played long enough for him to be chosen as the winner of my most collectible current professional football player distinction. That highly acclaimed label goes to the player who may very well play for another decade, or two, Brett Favre. His collectibles from the Packers, and Vikings, and oh yes, even the New York Jets, are setting all-time highs. While I am on the subject, lest I forget, Brett Favre was originally drafted by the Atlanta Falcons in 1991, and played for that franchise, albeit sparingly, for one year, before being traded to the Green Bay Packers to make his indelible mark on the face of professional football in the United States. And for you trivia buffs, try this one. Who was on the receiving end of Brett Favre's first completed pass as a Packer? Don't spend time looking it up. It was actually Favre himself. True story. In the second game of the 1992 season, one of his passes was deflected, and caught by none other himself. Bet you didn't know that. A game-used signed Favre helmet will cost you about \$6000, a game-used signed jersey about \$7000, and a signed football will set you back about \$600.

There you have it. My selections as the most collectible of the current players in professional baseball, basketball, and football. Of course, if any of you want to agree with me, or dare to dispute me, then you can email me at [collectingwithjeff@sbcglobal.net](mailto:collectingwithjeff@sbcglobal.net) or telephone me at (858) 692-1190. Likewise, I would enjoy hearing from you with any comments or questions about sports collectibles in general, as well.

## EMAILS:

**QUESTION #1:** Just heard you on KMOX St. Louis last night. Very interesting show. Back in the 70s I did a few pencil drawings of Muhammad Ali. He was in Tulsa in 1982 to promote a new boxing venue at a hotel, so I took one of my drawings there and was lucky enough to see him in the lobby and got him to sign my drawing of him. He put my name on it and dated it and signed it. I was wondering if it has any value, and what you might think it is worth.

**ANSWER:** Thank you for your email and for listening to the radio show. Regarding the value of your very interesting item, it is worth around \$500-600.

**QUESTION #2:** I have two signed Albert Pujols bats never used in a game, but they were his bats, with their COA that I purchased at one of his fund raisers, both in excellent shape. What do you think they are worth? I am thinking about selling one. I heard you on KMOX St. Louis and you are very knowledgeable.

I enjoyed your program.

**ANSWER:** Thanks for listening to the show and for your email. The bat is worth between \$250-300.

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS:

**Easy:** In the early 1990s Marshall Faulk finished second in the Heisman Trophy award balloting. Who beat him out?

**Moderate:** Who holds the all-time Boston Red Sox consecutive games hitting streak?

**Difficult:** Who was the winning Giant pitcher in the historic play-off game of October 3, 1951, in which Bobby Thomson hit the "Shot Heard 'Round the World"?

### TRIVIA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE OCTOBER NEWSLETTER:

**Easy:** Which U.S. President traded away Sammy Sosa when he was the managing partner of the Texas Rangers?

George W. Bush

**Moderate:** Who holds the all-time NFL record for most interceptions in a season?

Dick (Night Train) Lane, Detroit Lions, 1952.

**Difficult:** Which bestselling author in the 1950s won a Gold Medal in the Olympics?

Benjamin Spock, 1924 Paris Olympics, Men's Rowing.