

SEPTEMBER 2009 "COLLECTING WITH JEFF"  
by JEFF FIGLER

**BASEBALL MYSTERY: WHERE IS THOMSON'S BASEBALL?**

One of baseball's treasures that have not been absolutely proved to be found is that of the ball that Bobby Thomson of the New York Giants hit on October 3, 1951 to win the National League pennant.

There has been speculation that the ball was indeed kept all these years by a friend of the man who claimed to have caught the ball in the stands that historic day. And that story may well be true. However, if you indeed feel that you have the ball, or you know someone who thinks that they have that famous ball, then please come forward. And you will need to have a good story to go along with the ball.

Of course, the game between the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers on that day in early October 1951 has been termed one of the greatest games ever played. For those people not familiar with the game, those two hated rivals were playing the third and final game of the playoffs to decide who would win the National League pennant. The Dodgers had a 13 1/2 game lead over the Giants in mid-August, but the Giants had caught them on the last day of the season, to force a playoff.

In the third and deciding game the Dodgers had the lead going to the bottom of the ninth. The Dodger pitcher Don Newcombe was taken out of the game and replaced by Ralph Branca. Bobby Thomson, a local New Yorker, had been a solid, not spectacular, player throughout his career. His homerun in the ninth inning to beat the Dodgers at the Polo Grounds that day would forever make him a marked man in baseball history. For that matter, Branca's place in baseball history would now be remembered as well.

Thomson's homerun, called the "Shot Heard 'Round the World" is one of the most famous moments in sports history, not just baseball history. Why? Probably because the game was between two teams from New York who disliked each other. The Giants victory also capped off a dramatic comeback in late summer, and was achieved at the last possible instance. It showed to the American public that underdogs with long odds against them can prevail.

So, where is the ball? Possibly it is still out there, still to be turned in. Possibly it went the way of old baseballs and was thrown away. Possibly it was recently sold at auction. Of course, back in 1951 fans did not have the same craze for memorabilia as they have now. Who would know that baseballs hit into the stands, even if it meant winning the 1951 National League pennant, would have such historical significance and be worth a fortune? How much is that ball worth today? Oh, only about a million dollars.

Maybe you remember the words of the late Giants' announcer Russ Hodges when Bobby Thomson's blast landed in the stands: The Giants win the pennant,

The Giants win the pennant,

The Giants win the pennant."

But where is the ball that was hit into the stands?

EMAILS:

**QUESTION #1:** What is the value of a Super Bowl VII program that is not signed?

**ANSWER:** In good condition about \$50-65.

**QUESTION #2:** What is the value of a 1927 New York Yankees team signed ball?

**ANSWER:** About \$10,000-12,000, and possibly more if signed by Miller Huggins.

TRIVIA QUESTIONS:

**Easy:** Who was the last Triple Crown winner in baseball?

**Moderate:** Who scored the longest touchdown play in NFL history?

**Difficult:** Who holds the all-time record for having played in the most regular season baseball games without ever playing in a playoff game?

TRIVIA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE AUGUST NEWSLETTER:

**Easy:** Which major league baseball player holds the modern-day record for the most hits in a nine-inning game?

Rennie Stennett (7 hits for Pittsburgh on Sept. 16, 1975)

**Moderate:** Which NFL star holds the record for the most points in a single game?

Ernie Nevers (40 points for the Chicago Cardinals, Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28, 1929)

**Difficult:** Which NHL player holds the record for the most points in a game?

Darryl Sittler (10 points for the Toronto Maple Leafs on Feb. 7, 1976)