

Hall of Fame Election Adds Big Bucks to Collectibles

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The election of Tony Gwynn and Cal Ripken Jr. into the baseball Hall of Fame comes as a surprise to no one. The percentage of votes that each received came within a whisker of Tom Seaver's all-time record. Their five year wait to be inducted will finally be culminated in late July in Cooperstown.

The annual rite of induction also begs the inevitable question about the values of their memorabilia in addition to the impact on their lives. Suffice it to say that the busy schedules of Gwynn and Ripken have just become even busier.

Certainly the minimal free time that they once had will shrink. In Gwynn's case, he is the coach of the San Diego State University baseball team, his alma mater. Likewise with Ripken, who goes around the country promoting youth baseball. There are no indications that either of them will stop doing exactly what they love doing.

However, the memorabilia of Tony Gwynn and Cal Ripken Jr. will take new lives, as it has with any other hall of famer. Although there is no formula, it is safe to say that adding the HOF '07 marking will propel their memorabilia to another plateau. According to Scott Malack of Coach's Corner, of Souderton, Pennsylvania, a general rule is that small items such as balls and cards can triple in value. Likewise, an item such as a glove or jersey may double in value. The impact will be great at first, but will eventually calm down a bit. For example, a Tony Gwynn signed baseball will be worth \$75 with the HOF '07 markings, as compared with \$25-30 previously. In Gwynn's case, he is such a prolific signer that his signature has traditionally not been as high priced as most superstars, including Ripken.



With the elevation of Cal Ripken, Jr. and Tony Gwynn to the HOF, look for a rise in the value of their memorabilia.

But that is in the past. Now his signed baseball will be special because of his hall of fame status. A similar comparison can be made with baseball cards. If a Ripken rookie card was, let's say, valued at \$35, (depending on condition of course), before the HOF voting occurred, it easily could be worth double that much now, and even more if it is signed as a HOFer.

The same scenario with magazine covers. A signed July 28, 1997 Sports Illustrated issue touting Gwynn as the best hitter since Ted Williams is now valued at about \$125, more than double than before. Signed caps can be sold for about \$400 to \$500, and signed batting helmets a bit more.

The value of higher-priced memorabilia items can easily double with newly-inducted HOFers. A game-used signed jersey of Ripken or Gwynn will now be worth about \$5000, as compared with \$2000 to \$2500 previously. A game-used bat is now valued at \$3000, especially if it has the date that it was used.

A real collector's item is a display of Gwynn's jersey with that of Stan Musial. The careers of those two stars are often compared as well, each having won batting titles and both being members of the 3000 hit club. I have seen a display of a Gwynn and Musial game-signed jersey along with a signed Sporting News issue with both of them on the cover. That display is worth about \$25,000 considering that it now showcases two HOFers.

As with other HOFers, the value of memorabilia will be less in a year or two than immediately after induction. However, there is no getting around the fact that a HOF induction brings with it extra value, whether from autograph shows or speaking appearances. The hard work and dedication of HOFers during their playing days pays off handsomely after they are inducted.

If you are a collector my advice is to stock up now on any new HOFers such as Ripken and Gwynn. It would also be a good time to think of who might be inducted in the future such as "Goose" Gossage, Jim Rice, or even Andre Dawson, and start collecting some of their memorabilia.