

More to baseball collectibles than cards

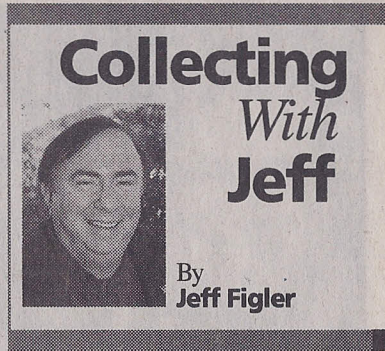
Besides baseball cards, there are a number of other collectibles related to the sport of baseball that are popular.

The list can be quite extensive, but following are some of the types of baseball items being collected: balls, seats, jerseys, figures, caps, bobbleheads, gloves, sheet music, bats, videos programs, board games and tickets books.

If you are going to collect baseballs, you'll probably want to collect signed balls. Of course, there will be exceptions to this statement. If you catch a ball while at a game, you will likely save that ball. You may even wish to send the ball to the batter who hit the ball for him to sign it and send it back to you. The first ball my son got at a game was hit by Ken Caminiti of San Diego. I sent the ball to Caminiti, who returned it signed within a couple weeks.

Also, you may be given a very old ball, let's say from the 1800s, that you may merely want to keep.

However, by and large, your collection will most likely be of signed baseballs. You may wish to categorize your collection by these classifications:



World Series balls, single-signed balls, team balls (for example, the 1953 St. Louis Browns), All-Star game balls, game baseballs (let's say, the last game ever at the Polo Grounds), and milestone balls (maybe, balls used in perfect games.) Let your imagination and creativity be your guide.

If you collect individual player baseballs, an autograph on an official Major League baseball, or previously on an American or National League ball, is the most desirable. However, if you see a player at a store and you have some other type of ball, do not bypass the opportunity to get the signature. But be polite, and thank him.

A signature signed on the "sweet

spot" (the place centered at the shortest distance between the two seams on the ball) is preferred. Have the player sign the ball with a Sharpie if at all possible.

If you are a ball collector, keep in mind the following "do not" suggestions: do not handle the ball too often, do not retrace over a faded signature, do not display an item in direct sunlight, do not try to preserve a ball by adding a substance to its surface and do not keep the balls in a wet or poorly ventilated area.

Naturally, there are several factors that affect the value of the ball. Such factors include:

Type of ball. An "official" ball is preferred.

Legibility. Some players' writing is meticulous, others is not (Greg Maddux, for example).

Placement of the signature. With single-signed balls, the "sweet spot" is preferred.

Scarcity and demand. Some players sign a lot, others do not. Of course, the signatures of deceased players are usually worth more than of living players.

Condition of the ball. Is it a new

ball or a beat up one? If it is beat up, is it a game-used ball?

Completeness of the signatures. Did the player sign Joe S. or Joe Smith?

If you do collect single-signed baseballs, naturally you can't go wrong with a Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Mickey Mantle, Mel Ott, Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, Ted Williams or a Joe DiMaggio ball.

If you collect All-Star game team balls, the most valuable is the 1933 American League All-Star team ball. That ball may have signatures of Ruth, Gehrig, Connie Mack, Eddie Collins, Jimmie Foxx, Lefty Grove and others. Its value may be around \$10,000.

A 1927 New York Yankees team signed ball may be worth more than that. The key signatures on that team ball are Ruth, Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri, Bob Meusel, Waite Hoyt and Herb Pennock. Some of these 1927 balls have the signature of Miller Huggins, the Yankees manager, while others do not.

Please contact me if you want to know more about collecting baseballs.

Send e-mail to collectingwithjeff@sbcglobal.net.