

## Tiger Woods ball for \$6,000? Not any more



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**BY JEFF FIGLER**

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Okay, no getting around it. The Tiger Woods we have known as a role model, product endorser, and the greatest golfer ever, is mortal. Personally, I consider Woods to have mastered a sport like no other athlete has mastered a sport. But before our very eyes, in barely a fortnight Woods has fallen faster than a Humpty Dumpty spill.

As Wood's popularity is heading south, he has lost some product endorsements, while maintaining others. But one thing for sure...the value of his collectibles will plummet at least for now.

It was barely a year ago that I scribed the fact that his memorabilia was reaching monumental proportions, even in a flat economy. Let me cite a couple examples. A single-signed Tiger Woods baseball was auctioned for \$5,975. (Yes, kids, tell your parents that instead of a Madden video game, that you want a Tiger Woods signed baseball). A year ago, that Woods-signed ball might have even been considered a bargain. Not today. If that same ball was auctioned today, it might fetch around \$2500, or less. That's right. As with many of our fallen sports icons, such as Misters Clemens, Bonds, and for good measure, the Cardinals new hitting coach, Mark McGwire, such a fall in the value of their sports memorabilia has taken place. Why should it be any different with Woods? Well, it probably will be a little different, because Woods is so likeable and personable. Now, I'm not going to say that Clemens and McGwire are not likeable and personable, but not anywhere near Woods. And please, don't try to compare Bonds with Woods. Talk about apples and oranges.

Let's take another Woods collectible. In a 2008 Sotheby's auction, a Masters Champions menu signed by Woods went for just shy of \$3,000. Hmm. Not today. In my humble opinion, it would go for, oh, about \$2,000. Try this one. A Wood's signed Junior Amateur cap was auctioned for

almost \$1800 last year. And today that cap would fetch around \$1,200, maybe less. Of course, there are many factors that come into play that help determine the highest bid price. A bidding war between, let's say, two or maybe even three, bidders will certainly help jack the bid price to an artificial high. But that is the nature of the auction process.

Now a tricky one. A few years ago a golf flag signed by Woods and the legendary Jack Nicklaus, the Golden Bear, from the 2006 Presidents Cup Team went for \$1500 and change. The combo of Nicklaus and Woods signing on a single item is like Gehrig and Ruth signing a piece, or Montana and Rice, or even Don Carter and Dick Weber, for those of you old time St. Louis bowling fans. Those items are true gems, national treasures that should be passed down from generation to generation and never to be possessed by anyone outside the family tree. A Nicklaus-Woods item may lose a little of its value and luster now, but not much.

If you are the possessor of a Woods piece, don't despair...yet. Don't panic, don't do anything irrational, or dangerous to your health. I would not even consider selling any Woods items. Maybe Tiger Woods will have a good explanation to justify his actions and silence the wolves. Maybe all will pass, and Tiger will again be, well, Tiger, and with that, his memorabilia will again reach surrealistic levels.

But until that time, as for me, give me a Nicklaus-Palmer signed item.