



AXA Art Insurance Collection Management Series:

Caring for Sports Memorabilia

There are many factors that compel us to acquire sports memorabilia. For some, it is a deep love, often developed from early childhood, for a favorite team or sport. For others, it is the desire to celebrate athletic triumph and supreme skill. Others see collecting as a unique mode of financial investment. And for many, it is a combination of all of the above.

Whatever the driving force, the desire to own a piece of sports history—whether it be game-used equipment, original autographs, or rare trading cards—has led to heavy competition amongst buyers and triggered rising prices. A few years ago, a T206 Honus Wagner tobacco card sold for \$2.35 million. Mark McGwire's 70th home run ball commanded a \$3 million price tag at auction in 1999. In 2010, the original two typewritten pages inscribed with the legendary James Naismith's 13 rules of basketball sold for \$4.3 million. That same year, hockey star Bobby Orr's rookie jersey fetched \$191,200 at auction.

Regardless of the value, there are some simple steps all collectors must follow to protect their memorabilia for future generations.

Buying & Authentication

- Before a purchase, personally examine the item to determine its condition. Research the provenance as well as the uniqueness of the object. Who is the seller? Are there professional organizations with which he or she is affiliated?
- Become an expert in the area of sports collecting that interests you. What are the important dates, trends, terms, equipment, and materials used? Who are the important people and manufacturers?
- Given the rising popularity of collecting and the proliferation of hard-to-detect fakes, it is highly recommended that items be authenticated and slabbed. Comparisons of paint pigmentations, signatures, and sizing are just a few methods that authentication specialists use to determine if an object is genuine. Authentication will be of great importance should you choose to re-sell the item.
- Beware of forged signatures. A rubber-stamped autograph can be simple to spot—look for tiny distortions, irregularities, and smudges.
- Also beware of anachronistic irregularities. Keep in mind that signatures in ballpoint pen first appeared in 1945 and signatures in black permanent markers appeared after 1964.

Storage & Display

- Objects should be stored in a cool, dark area. Temperatures should not exceed 72°F and a constant 40-50 percent relative humidity is recommended.
- Light can be extremely harmful. Natural, florescent, and ultraviolet light can cause discoloration and

fading and warp leather and delicate textiles. Paints, inks, and dyes are especially susceptible to damage from sunlight and fluorescent light. Display sensitive objects in cases with light-protective glass.

- Paper items, such as cards, posters, and programs should be stored with archival tissue and/or protected by un-buffered acid-free board or plastic to avoid creasing, wrinkling, and soiling.

Value & Insurance

- Have your collection re-appraised on a regular basis to establish replacement values and ensure your insurance policy reflects accurate values.
- Understand that genuine signatures age and their appearance can change over time. Keep a reference of autographs for comparison.
- Keep thorough documentation on your collection. Include purchase invoices, letters of authenticity, photographs, and full descriptions of each object. In some cases, you may have auction and/or provenance details for high-value objects. This information is invaluable and should be kept in a safe location.

For more information on insuring your collection, please contact 888-873-6931.

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