

Collecting Tiger Woods

by Jeff Figler

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For a sport that was once considered elitist, Woods has changed the face of golf. But there is not a golfer – including the ones on the PGA tour – who doesn't recognize that Woods' achievements have helped the entire sport, memorabilia with equal gusto.

Just take a look at some very recent Tiger Woods memorabilia auction results. A single baseball signed by Woods was auctioned for \$5975 in a Heritage Auction last month. That is incredible. Of course, collectors know that celebrities, including athletes, sign baseballs. Rock performers, including Clapton, Dylan, the Stones, and the Beatles have signed baseballs. Abbott and Costello, Frank Sinatra, Humphrey Bogart, Bob Hope, George Burns, and every US President since William Howard Taft signed baseballs. But for a baseball autographed by a golf star auctioned for nearly \$6000 is remarkable. In that same Heritage auction, a golf flag signed by Woods and Jack Nicklaus from the 2006 Presidents Cup Team went for \$1554. Sure, I would rather have a signed baseball than a flag, but \$1554 for the flag is pretty incredible as well, as flags typically are not highly collectible.



Find a Tiger Woods' autograph? Buy it, says Jeff Figler.

In a Memory Lane Auction last month also, a 1998 "Champions of Golf" Tiger Woods card in mint condition was auctioned for \$2704. That was simply for an unsigned card. That price is usually reserved for either a signed card or a vintage card from at least 50 years ago. This card is only ten years old, and of a golfer. Unheard of. But we are talking about Tiger Woods, an athlete who has transcended sports. We are talking about Tiger Woods, who is all of 32 years old, and whom Golf Digest predicts will become the world's first billionaire athlete in 2010. Makes you wonder if you shouldn't wish your newborn child to grow up to be a professional golfer. But how many two year olds putted against Bob Hope on "The Mike Douglas Show," or shot 48 for nine holes at three? Golf Digest does feature many kindergarteners, but with Tiger, the magazine did just that.

In that same Memory Lane auction, a Tiger Woods signed lithograph was auctioned for \$1679. Sounds like a bargain to me. A 1998 Masters Champions menu signed by Woods in a Sotheby's auction took \$2932, and a 1992 Junior Amateur cap with his John Hancock fetched \$1776.

Woods is currently under an exclusive signing agreement with Upper Deck, which pounced on a golden opportunity when they saw it. In 2006, a Tiger Woods Upper Deck limited edition signed driver went for \$4731.

Why is Tiger so appealing? He is good, he is an inspiration to diverse groups across the world, and he is approachable. What is most important is that he has mastered a game like no one else ever has, and quite possibly, never will.

Collectors appreciate memorabilia of athletes that are exceptional, no matter if they themselves have ever played a round of golf in their life. A comparison can easily be made to the great Pél  , considered by most to be the greatest soccer player of all time. His memorabilia, too, is auctioned at top prices, because collectors recognize the pinnacle talent these athletes possess.

If you have a chance to get some Tiger Woods memorabilia, go for it. The value of any of Woods' items will only dramatically increase in value. I often am asked about what are sure "no brainers" in sports collectibles. At the top of the list is any Woods item. Period. Better yet, if you have a Woods item, keep it, and put it in a vault. Only kidding on the vault, but you really do have something of value.

Now, if you do go to the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines, and you see a golfer in the last group who is wearing a red shirt, chances are it's Tiger Woods. He always wears a red shirt on the final day of every tournament because his mother considers it a power color. A little trivia to collect about the greatest golfer of all time.