

Sports books starting to emerge as collectibles



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By JEFF FIGLER

SPECIAL TO THE POST-DISPATCH

From the time I was but a toddler, I can always remember having a passion for reading books. Not that it was always textbooks that I enjoyed reading, but rather, books from the local library in University City, Missouri. I had a part-time job at the library, so it was not difficult to get books to read.

“Sports” has always been my preference in books. My favorite sports authors? Rick Reilly, John Feinstein, and David Halberstam. Of the three, Halberstam narrowly gets the nod as my choice.

Now, as collectors know, books, and especially first edition copies, are very collectible, especially if they are of top-flight authors. For example, first editions of Harper Lee's “To Kill a Mockingbird”, F. Scott Fitzgerald's “The Great Gatsby”, and Ernest Hemingway's “The Old Man and the Sea”, fetch several thousand dollars if they are in good condition with a dust jacket, and even more if they are signed.

Sports books have begun to appear in auctions as well. Naturally, it will take quite a while for one to be even included in the same sentence as the books just mentioned. However, there have been some sports books that have been made into pretty darn good movies, including “The Natural”, and “Bang the Drum Slowly.”

Halberstam stands out as an author because of his thoroughness. He wrote about several subjects besides sports, including politics, history, business, American society, and the media. His works include “The Best and the Brightest”, about the Vietnam War and “The Powers That Be”, about powerful media figures. Among his sports books are “Playing for Keeps”, about Michael Jordan, “The Breaks of the Game”, about the Portland Trailblazers, and “October 1964”, about the 1964 World Series between the

New York Yankees and the St. Louis Cardinals.

If you have not read any of his sports works give it a try. You will be impressed, and the books will be a unique addition to your sport collection as well.

Ironically, David Halberstam died in 2007 on his way to Mountain View, California, to interview former pro-quarterback Y.A. Tittle for a book about the 1958 NFL Championship game.