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I interviewed the management of Major League Baseball (MLB) and Topps Baseball in February and March. I received some great feedback from both those interviews and I will continue the interviews in the months ahead. The April report will take a step back from the interviews so I can answer some of the most frequently asked questions in my email box.

People always ask, “What is the most valuable baseball card, autograph, baseball bat, etc?” Collecting sports memorabilia is a tedious, but rewarding task. It can be extremely difficult to find what you are looking for. Collectors’ know what they want, but can not always find it. For example, if you are putting together a 1952 Topps Baseball set, you will need 407 cards. The 1952 set is one of the most expensive sets ever produced. This is Mickey Mantle’s Rookie year and this card is very expensive. (Mantle does have a 1951 Bowman card, but that card is considered his first card.) The Mantle is not hard to find, but some of the other cards are. When you think value, you think dollar amount. The Andy Pafko and Eddie Mathews are hard to find in high grade and I think these two cards are more valuable.

Listed below are a few of the hard to find AND valuable baseball cards. (I have omitted the Honus Wagner because everybody knows about that card.)

1. 1914 Christy Mathewson Cracker Jack
2. 1933 Goudey Andy Cohen
3. 1909-1911 T206 Sherry Magie error card
4. 1909-1911 T206 Ty Cobb with Ty Cobb back
5. 1914 Cracker Jack Shoeless Joe Jackson

Many people think that a Babe Ruth autograph is hard to obtain which would mean it is worth a lot of money. Babe Ruth signatures are in high demand and there isn’t enough supply to keep up with this demand. However, Babe Ruth signed for everybody. He never turned down an autograph request. There are a plethora of Babe Ruth signed baseballs and they are highly collectible. They generally are worth more if signed on an official league baseball and without personalization. A Lou Gehrig signed baseball on the “sweet spot” of a baseball is worth much more than a Babe Ruth autographed baseball. Gehrig respected “The Babe” and reserved the sweet spot of a baseball for Mr. Ruth. Finding a Gehrig signature on the sweet spot is very rare and valuable. Even more valuable than a Gehrig autographed baseball is a baseball signed by Mel Ott. Ott is a HOF inductee and a member of the prestigious 500 HR club. A Mel Ott signed baseball on the sweet spot with his full name (Melvin) can command \$50,000.

Vintage Jerseys are almost impossible to find for a variety of reasons. Players’ were given 1 home jersey and 1 road jersey. After the season, the jerseys were typically handed down to the minor leaguers to wear the following season. Vintage game worn jerseys are commonly found in the

families of former ballplayer's and are worth a lot of money due to the provenance attached. Any vintage game-worn jersey must be properly authenticated by a third party to verify authenticity.

Another FAQ (Frequently Asked Question) How can I judge condition?

Answer: You need to look at all 4 corners, centering, (front and back) and overall appearance of the card. I have purchased cards that are over 100 years old and I expect them to have rounded corners, and a rough appearance. Most cards will have slightly rounded corners and is normal. Having 4 sharp corners is a rarity and these cards are worth more for obvious reasons. However, if a card is off-center, it detracts from the overall appearance and essentially negates all positive aspects of the card. There are some years that are notoriously known for being off-centered. The manufacturer cut the cards a specific way and they were inserted into the packs of baseball cards as is. The best way for me to judge condition is to have a scan or picture emailed to me. It can still be difficult to judge, but is much better than talking about the condition over the phone. This is a business that you really need to be hands on and see everything in person.

Question: How do I find vintage baseball cards and memorabilia?

Answer: I am consistently amazed at the collections' that I find sitting in attics, untouched for decades. I find collections from both collectors' and non-collectors. Sometimes the items are passed down from generation to generation and sometimes the collection will originate from one owner who has been collecting his entire life.

I respect each one of my clients' and treat them as I would want to be treated. I know birthdays, names, etc. Caring goes a long way. Referrals and word of mouth is really important and a good portion of my "finds" come from referrals.

-Michael