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hot & WOW

sports

Tom Brady card soars; Sosa stuff takes a hit

On the same day Tom Brady quarterbacked the New England Patriots to a third Super Bowl title, Brady's 2000 SP Authentic rookie card — No. 12 of 1,250 — sold for \$4,150 in an online auction.

Steve Bloedow, football pricing analyst for *Tuff Stuff* magazine, said other versions of Brady's SP Authentic rookie card (pictured) have been selling for about \$600, up from about \$400 when the NFL playoffs began.



Meanwhile, Sammy Sosa memorabilia hasn't fared as well since the slugger's trade from the Chicago Cubs to the Baltimore Orioles.

Brain Schwartz of Schwartz Sports in Chicago said sales of Sosa memorabilia were already slow during the off-season. When the trade was announced, he estimates Sosa memorabilia decreased in value at least 50 percent.



Pictured: Sammy Sosa 2001 Topps card.

antiques

Furniture sells well at New York City show

Despite an emphasis on small items in today's antiques market, furniture sold well during the recent Americana Antiques Week shows in New York City.

"We had our best show ever," said gallery owner Kass Hogan. Tables, chairs, lamps and accessories sold well for Hogan.

Rosemary Schorr of Schorr & Dobinsky Antiques in Bridgehampton, N.Y., said nearly all the furniture in her booth disappeared in the show's first five hours. Most of her offerings were French.

Dealer Kenny Ball of Charlottesville, Va., also said French furniture sold well for him.

For more information on a variety of collectibles visit www.collect.com

Murano glass

The little Italian island has produced works of art for centuries



Murano hourglasses by designer Paolo Venini. (Photo courtesy Luca Vignelli, Mint Museum.)

As vivid as any color of the rainbow and as crystal clear as the finest of gems, Murano glass has lasted for centuries.

The glass is named for the island of Murano, located in a lagoon about a mile off the coast of Venice, Italy. Around 1291, glassmakers in Venice were forced onto the island for fear that fires from their furnaces would destroy the city. Others speculate the master glassblowers were sent there to protect trade secrets.

Traditions were handed down in Murano glassblowing families for generations. The art was kept secret, not allowing other glassmaking meccas around the world to copy their techniques.

The families that developed the craft in the 13th century are still the big names in glass today.

"If you are a master glassblower on Murano, you are a big shot," said Carl Gable, collector and author of *Murano Magic* (Schiffer, 2004). "He is the king of the roost and deservedly so."

Murano pieces were produced to serve utilitarian needs, but because they were handcrafted, they are now considered fine works of art.

"It's the combination of the art and the artistry," Gable said. "The glass has a unique feel to it. It's almost like a wet surface feeling."

Determining genuine Murano glass from pieces of similar style made in other locales can be difficult.

Know-how comes from touch and sight rather than from memorizing patterns.

Some Murano glass was blown into a mold, making multiples of one pattern. But most were created individually, giving each piece unique qualities. This also results in imperfections often found in handcrafted items.

"You can look at a piece in many cases and say, 'That's a flaw from the making, not something that happened to the piece after it left the factory.'"

Repairs are common among pieces that are centuries old. According to Gable, the Venetians are more tolerant of well-repaired pieces than are collectors in other fields.

"In Venice," he said, "if it's something that's well-repaired and rare, they're satisfied with it."

Like most art forms that evolve over centuries, Murano glass has seen the ebb and flow of popularity. Sometimes these resurgences were centuries apart. Gable said the 1500s were the first peak, with a second wave from the 1930s into the 1960s.

Today, the most desirable pieces of Murano glass can reach six figures, but others are more affordable.

"You can get something that you enjoy and appreciate in your house for \$100," Gable said.

"I think when a lot of people look at Murano glass, they think it's too bright or too stylized. But once you understand the exuberance of it all, I think you'll love it."



Mosaico glass vase by designer Ercole Barovier, circa 1924.



Vase by Benvenuto Barovier Artista Barovier Floreale, circa 1913-1914. (Photo courtesy Luca Vignelli, Mint Museum.)

bids & pieces

Cast-iron toys top auction

Cast-iron toys topped much of the bidding at a recent Randy Inman Auctions sale in Allentown, Pa.

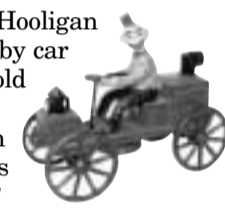
A four-seat brake by Hubley (pictured) sold for \$16,500. Its condition was listed as "excellent."

A bright yellow-and-green A.C. Williams take-apart

sedan (pictured) sold for \$1,760. It dated to the 1930s.

A J.E. Stevens still-bank replica of the battleship *Maine* (pictured) brought \$7,150. It was 10 1/2 inches long.

A Happy Hooligan soapbox-derby car (pictured) sold for \$4,675. Its condition was listed as "near mint."



ask the expert

Q: I have a 1938 *Major League Handbook Facts and Figures*. Can you tell me what it is worth? It is complete, and all the pages are in good shape. It was copyrighted in 1938 in Racine, Wis., published by Whitman Publishing Co., and edited by Bob Elson.

A: Whitman Publishing Co. produced these annual statistics books from the mid-1930s to 1940 or so, in this case tapping a well-known broadcaster, WGN's Bob Elson, as the "editor." The books were precursors to the *Sporting News* guides that began a few years later. Collecting publications got pushed to the hobby's back burner a bit with the expansion of new material and dramatic price increases for memorabilia and equipment in recent years, slowing the demand for such items. This book might bring \$30-\$40 in near-mint condition, but a specimen like this one, showing a bit of honest wear, would command somewhat less than that.

— T.S. O'Connell, editor *Sports Collectors Digest*

e-mail asktheexpert@krause.com. When requesting information about an item, please include a detailed description and a photograph, if possible. Personal replies and printed responses are not guaranteed.

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