

Sporting Memorabilia

With Price Guide

In 1997 Sotheby's established a British record auction price when a gilt-bronze replica of the Jules Rimet Trophy for the football World Cup made £230,000. The original trophy was made of solid gold and was stolen in Brazil in the early 1970s and is believed to have been melted down for bullion. The precise replica sold at Sotheby's had been commissioned by the Football Association in 1966 and was the closest object in existence to the fabled original trophy, hence the price paid by the buyer FIFA (football's world's governing body) at the auction. The trophy is now on permanent loan display at the National Football Museum in Preston.

However, in the space of an extraordinary 48 hours in May 2005 the bar was raised on two occasions. The specialist sporting memorabilia auction company Graham Budd held a sale on behalf of Ascot Racecourse who had closed due to a major redevelopment programme. The royal racecourse had consigned over 300 lots of fixtures, fittings and memorabilia identified as having no obvious new home in the modernised setting. This included a magnificent pair of wrought and cast iron gates through which countless legendary racehorses and jockeys had passed for a century or more from the racetrack to the winner's enclosure. A bidding battle ensued between the prominent Irish racehorse owner J. P. McManus and the English owner and breeder Bill Gredley, the latter winning the gates for his equestrian complex at a price of £280,000.

Two days later at Christie's South Kensington saleroom the auction house sold one of the original trophies for the F.A. Cup, football's most romantic and historic knockout competition. Lord Kinnaird, the Football Association's president, had retired in 1910 and the cup in use at the time was his retirement present. The trophy made £420,000 hammer.

The May 2005 sales illustrate the extraordinary current interest in sporting memorabilia, an auction market that is about 25 years old. In the early 1980s the major auction houses began dipping their feet in the sporting waters and began holding small, experimental sales aimed at traditional sports, especially golf and cricket. The response was immediately encouraging. The golf market in particular began to flourish quickly and was helped by the international popularity of the sport. Cleverly, the auction houses timed their golf offerings to be on the eve of the Open Championship and held in the locality of the tournament itself. The

golffiana auction became part of the international visitor's itinerary, especially the American audience and prices began rising steadily. For a glorious but short lived period the Japanese became very active in the golf market much to the delight of the auction houses and their vendors as the dollar battled against the yen and sterling. Record prices soared including £92,000 for a golf club and £28,000 for a golf ball. However when the Far Eastern economy took a downturn, the Japanese buyers withdrew from the market and have never returned. The golf market has struggled to recover from overheating in the 1990s, but the Graham Budd price of £48,000 for an early Open Championship winner's medal last year (a world record price for a golf medal) demonstrates that quality always wins over.

The cricket market is an interesting example of how a sporting memorabilia market can fluctuate with the successes or otherwise of a national team. English cricket had been somewhat in the doldrums since Australia regained the Ashes in 1989. Surely it was no coincidence that the cricket market in England had been very flat during the preceding period, whilst it had accelerated sharply downunder when the all-conquering Australian team dominated the sport's world stage. With England regaining the Ashes in 2005 the market is expecting to see a few sixes hit when the auction houses hold their forthcoming summer cricket sales. This was certainly the case when England's rugby players brought home the World Cup in 2003 – only to see the market normalise again due to the national team's subsequent and current lacklustre performances.

The market that has the biggest following is football, which is not surprising given its position as the most popular sport in the world. Interestingly it is the youngest of the markets promoted by the auction houses who in all probability were reluctant to associate themselves with the sport during days when it was plagued by problems such as hooliganism. However in the 1990s the game's image received a healthy makeover and began benefiting from record attendances, unimaginable riches from the television and media companies and the introduction of exotic foreign superstars to the Premier League. Football was now fashionable and began attracting new spectators from perhaps a more moneyed background in comparison to the traditional fan. All of these factors spilled over to the collector's market and football memorabilia has proved to be the fastest growing area of all over the

by Graham Budd

past 10 years or so. Even items such as football programmes are collected with enormous zest and enthusiasm. Recently, Sotheby's set a world record price of £12,000 with the sale of an extremely scarce programme for the 1901 F.A. Cup Final programme contested at Crystal Palace by Tottenham Hotspur and Sheffield United. Incredibly, Spurs were a non-League team at the time but overcame the established professionals from Sheffield. A feat that is unlikely to be repeated again.

Other areas of the market with smaller but nonetheless loyal collectors would include tennis, which has a superb newly refurbished museum at Wimbledon offering collectors an invaluable insight into the range of items that can be collected. A tennis painting by Beryl Cook comes under the hammer at Graham Budd Auctions on 10th May and is expected to fetch between £20,000 and £30,000, see page 34. The Olympic Games has an international following, while boxing is particularly popular in the USA.

It is worth ending this market report with a footnote regarding America. The spectacular prices that have been discussed here are dwarfed in comparison with those achieved in the United States where American sports, notably baseball, rule as king. A few years ago a lucky spectator caught a baseball hit into the crowd to beat the sport's all time home run record. The fan duly proceeded to consign the ball to auction where it sold for two million dollars.

The Author

Graham Budd gained 25 years experience in the auction business at Sotheby's where he was a deputy director and head of sporting memorabilia organising a series of high profile sales including the collections of the sportsmen Sir Stanley Matthews and Lester Piggott. In 2004 he established his own specialist sporting memorabilia auction company Graham Budd Auctions which trades in close association with Sotheby's. He is also the author of *Racing Art and Memorabilia, a Celebration of the Turf*; and *Soccer Memorabilia, a Collectors' Guide*, published by Philip Wilson in 1997 and 1999 respectively.



A sand iron used by Willie Park senior when winning the 1860 Open Championship Graham Budd Auctions, London. Jan 06.
HP: £25,000. ABP: £29,406.



Shigehisa of Dewa, a pair of 18thC Japanese iroie iron stirrups, each inlaid in silver and gold with overall mon, the edges with stylised waves, the foot rests of red lacquer, 26.5cm high. (2)
Cheffins, Cambridge. Apr 05.
HP: £1,700. ABP: £1,999.



Hardys Slaters brass 60lb spring balance fish scale. Gorrings, Lewes. Jan 05.
HP: £340. ABP: £399.



Hardys The Silex Major 3.75ins reel. Gorrings, Lewes. Jan 05.
HP: £160. ABP: £188.



Riding whip, mounted with gilt-metal. Gorrings, Bexhill. Jul 05.
HP: £65. ABP: £76.



A gold and enamel Lonsdale Belt won by the champion boxer Tancy Lee in 1919 Graham Budd Auctions, London. Jan 06.
HP: £19,000. ABP: £22,348.



Penny Farthing bicycle, probably French, 48.5in spoked wheel and rubber tyre, rubber pedals, leather seat and wooden handles, some restoration. Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Feb 05.
HP: £1,600. ABP: £1,882.



20th century tennis racket by Feltham, London 'The Alexandria', 1602, convex wedge handle, af, 26.5 ins. Gorrings, Lewes. Jul 04.
HP: £300. ABP: £352.



Long nosed driver, hickory shaft by T. Stevenson, St Andrews. Great Western Auctions, Glasgow. Jun 05.
HP: £140. ABP: £164.



An enamelled, chromed motor vehicle badge for the Bugati owners club. Fellows, Birmingham. Oct 03. HP: £60. ABP: £70.



Hardy 21/2in brass 'Perfect' reel, c1896. Moore Allen & Innocent, Cirencester. Sep 05.
HP: £2,800. ABP: £3,293.



Sterling silver mounted cricket ball, with presentation inscription, dated 1933. Gorrings, Lewes. Mar 05.
HP: £290. ABP: £341.



Split-cane Hardy Palakona flyrod, 'The Houghton' No E95016, 9ft 6in. Dee Atkinson & Harrison, Driffield. Jul 04.
HP: £110. ABP: £129.



A blue and white velvet sports cap dated 1928-29, decorated with a rose and the initials Y.H.A and a cloth shield shape badge, boxed Gorrings, Lewes. Mar 04.
HP: £35. ABP: £41.



Denis Compton's MCC blazer for the tour of West Indies 1953-54 Graham Budd Auctions, London. Jan 06.
HP: £850. ABP: £999.



A Penfold Man golf ball advertisement figure. Graham Budd Auctions, London. Jan 06.
HP: £260. ABP: £305.



Old Gray and Nicholls 'Crusader' cricket bat, signed by the 1963 West Indies and Warwickshire cricket team. Fellows & Sons, Hockley, Birmingham. Oct 03.
HP: £100. ABP: £117.



A set of Michael Schumacher race-worn overalls + detail Graham Budd Auctions, London. Jan 06.
HP: £2,600. ABP: £3,058.



1953 BSA 250cc C.10 motorcycle, registration number THA 662, burgundy painted frame, original log book and a service sheets book. Fellows & Sons, Hockley, B'ham. Oct 03.
HP: £420. ABP: £494.



1920s 4ins brass salmon reel by Hardy Bros, Alnwick, in original fitted leather case, Dia 10.5cm. Gorrings, Bexhill. Jun 05.
HP: £240. ABP: £282.



A rare Mallochs brass fly reel, Dia 10cm Gorrings, Bexhill On Sea. Sep 04. HP: £95. ABP: £111.



An early 20th century gutta percha golf ball in poor condition Gorrings, East Sussex. Mar 02.
HP: £30. ABP: £35.



Siebe Gorman copper six bolt divers helmet, serial no. 16060, 48.5cm high. Sworders, Stansted Mountfitchet. Nov 04.
HP: £2,500. ABP: £2,940.



Thurston & Co Ltd billiard cue, c1900, 16oz, 57in and another ash cue with ebony and spliced butt, 15.5oz, 57in within a pine hinged lid case. Halls Fine Art, Shrewsbury. Jun 05.
HP: £400. ABP: £470.



A ray's tail riding crop, the creamy shagreen with white metal ends, 85.5cm long Cheffins, Cambridge. Feb 05.
HP: £160. ABP: £188.



Pressed fibreboard Dunlop golf ball shop counter display, 15in high. Dee Atkinson & Harrison, Driffield. Jul 04.
HP: £70. ABP: £82.



1966 World Cup England rosette. Kivells, Bude. Dec 05. HP: £25. ABP: £29.