

# GARAGE SALES

## Collecting Sports Memorabilia

As 1990s kids — and their parents — downsize and move, more and more sports collectibles such as baseball cards and bobbleheads are filling up garage sale tables.

Some of these collectibles are worth real money, but others are duds. Here are some tips if you're working on your collection.

### **DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO COLLECT**

Sports memorabilia includes things like photos, trading cards, jerseys, helmets, balls and bats, sports equipment and even things such as stadium seats, promotional materials and more. They can be associated with a particular team, a particular sporting event (think the Super Bowl) or with a venue (such as Dodger Stadium).

Some items can be autographed by players, coaches and even announcers or administrators. Make sure that autographs are authentic and have some provenance — meaning the seller can tell you when and how they collected the autograph. Make sure the story they tell you makes



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sense, meaning that the player played for the team in question during that year and was in the place they said. For instance, if a seller says they got Babe Ruth's autograph in 1952, you should know it's probably fake. The Bambino died in 1948.

**MAKE SURE IT'S REAL**  
With better printing tech-

nology, it's easier than ever to make fakes. When you're shopping at garage sales, look for certificates of authenticity from a reputable organization such as the Professional Sports Authenticators or Memorabilia Evaluation and Research Services. These are authentication companies that make sure you're dealing with the genuine article.

### **KNOW THE MARKET**

As always, you want to know the market of the collectibles you're dealing with. If you're just getting started, try joining a local club or meeting with other experts to learn as much as you can about available items are pricing.

If you're collecting just for the love of the team or the

game, you should still know what items are worth on the open market so that you don't end up overpaying for merchandise. Also, try to avoid getting emotionally attached to any one item. Some sellers will see that emotion and use it against you in negotiating a price. Whether you're shopping for love or for value, you need to know both what the item is worth and what the item is worth to you. Set a budget for your collection and stick to it.

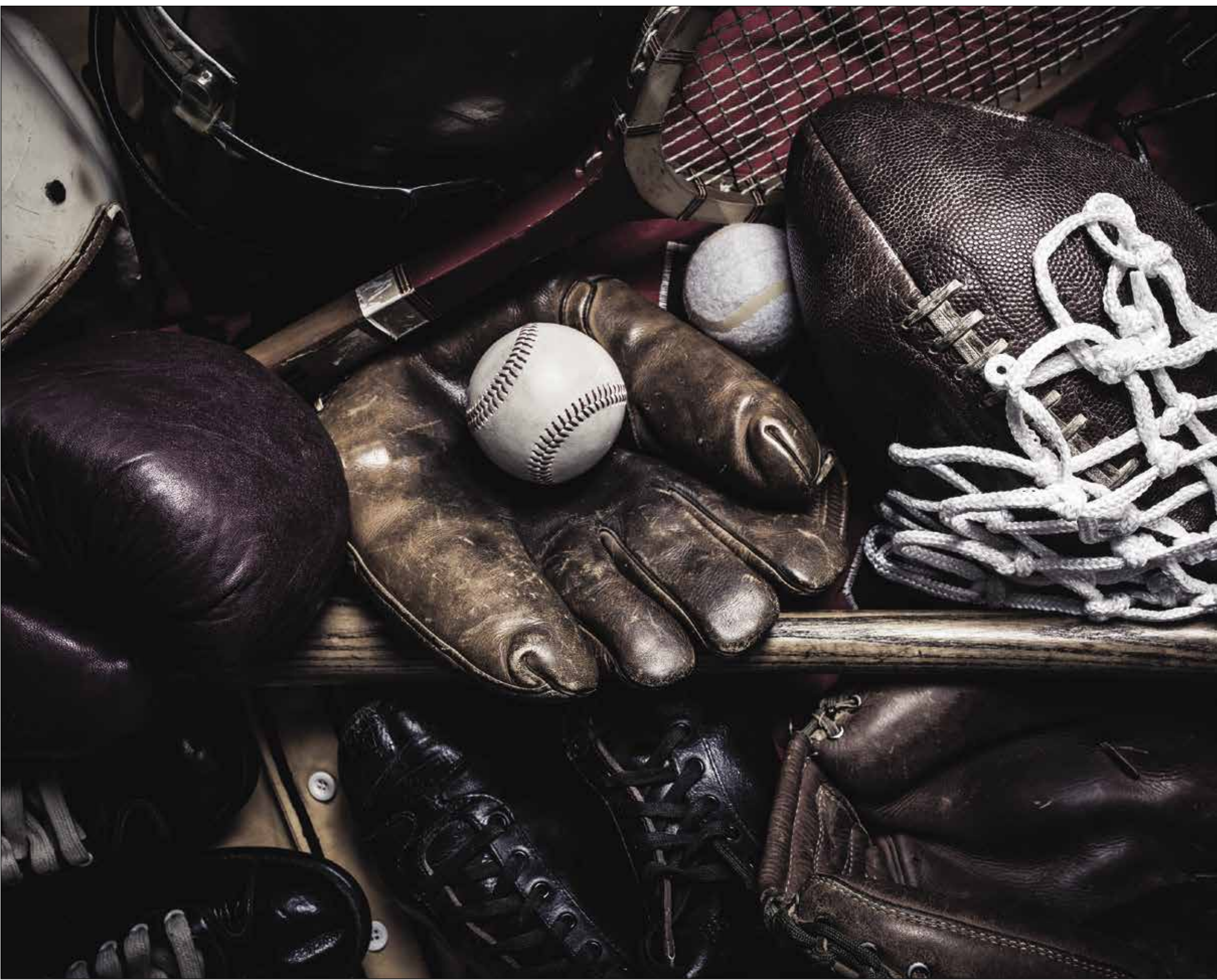
You should also get comfortable with the fact that these things may not increase in value. Like all markets, sports collectibles are volatile, meaning prices fluctuate along with economic conditions. Make sure you're buying pieces that you love for themselves as well as for their investment value.

### **GET INSURANCE**

As you grow your collection, you may notice that it's also growing in value. At some point, you may want to consider adding a Valuable Articles policy to your property insurance.

This will protect you in case your collection is lost, stolen or damaged. Also be aware of inflation. From time to time, it's wise to reevaluate your insurance and make sure the full value of your collection is still covered.

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### SELLER TIPS

#### Get a Professional Opinion

If you suspect you might have a valuable item, spring for an appraisal. This independent professional will assess the item and analyze market conditions to give you an accurate pricing report. An accurate appraisal can help you sell your collectibles more quickly and for their correct value.

## AD SPACE