

# The Case of the Bambino's Bat

By Ryan Paveza, Enservio Select Appraiser | October 5, 2016

Just in time for the World Series, this 'Case Of' shares the claim story of an avid baseball fan and collector whose claim included a Babe Ruth bat, which the insured claimed a value of \$30,000.

Babe Ruth is regarded as one of the greatest sports heroes in American culture and is considered by many to be the greatest baseball player of all time.

Ruth memorabilia consistently commands extremely high values from the collector's marketplace. For instance, in 2012, the Bambino's jersey from 1920 (the oldest known item from Ruth) fetched a cool \$4.4 million at auction. The bat from his first home run at Yankee Stadium sold for \$1.3 million in 2004.



Babe Ruth, 1912, photo taken by Paul Thompson

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Our team was called in to establish value of the policyholder's collection, which included among other things autographed baseballs, for which invoices were provided, and the famed Babe Ruth bat. With documentation and images in hand, the team was able to identify and appraise a fair market value for the collection.

For the Bambino's bat, we were provided with three photographs, as well as an undated letter from a collectibles retailer indicating the bat was a "Babe Ruth Professional Model," at 36-inches long, with a weight of over 38 ounces, fitting the criteria of an authentic Babe Ruth bat. The letter also stated how the words, "St. Mary's Hall" were written on the side of the bat.

The author of the letter suggested that the bat was given to St. Mary's by Babe Ruth himself.

With the pictures and letter in hand, but lack of an invoice for the bat, our team began extensive research in the collectibles marketplace to [determine authenticity and value](#), as the provided letter contained statements that were clearly based on opinion versus actual provenance.

From our research of comparable Babe Ruth “game used” bats of like, kind and quality (LKQ) in the retail marketplace, and a review of recent realized auction values, we identified the claimed bat to be a 1923-1926 Babe Ruth Pro Stock Bat, “game used,” with side writing.

A similar bat from a known auction house was appraised by a leading expert who identified the writing on the side of the barrel as, “St. Marys Hawaii 5-6-26.” This suggested the bat saw action in Hawaii in an exhibition visit several years before the famous 1934 “Tour of Japan”.

Had our team simply taken the letter at face value and agreed on the amount, the claim would have been a swing and a miss at \$30,000. Instead, our extensive research found flaws in the original assessment, and we provided a vintage replacement value of \$6,000.

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