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SPORTS ★ FINAL

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Bears bad news for Yank sale

BY ANDREW GARIB and TINA MOORE
DAILY NEWS WRITERS

GOING ONCE, going twice — going nowhere.

The sellers of the last home-run baseball hit in Yankee Stadium struck out yesterday when the ball didn't sell at a sports memorabilia auction in Manhattan.

Hit by Bombers catcher Jose Molina, the ball was among hundreds of autographed baseballs, trophies and other Yankees mementoes that were on the auction block at Madison Square Garden.

"There's been some disappointment, to be sure," said Arlan Ettinger, president of Guernsey's, which sponsored the auction. "Clearly the economy has affected bidding."

He had expected the ball to go for \$200,000 to \$300,000. The minimum opening bid was \$100,000.

There were no takers, and the auction

house wouldn't accept lower bids on the ball.

Item after item stalled during bidding as final prices came in much lower than expected or not at all — bringing the country's fiscal crisis from the bear market to the bull-pen.

"It's a buyer's market just like the stock market," said Mitch Baker of Baker's Sports Marketing. "It's a good time to buy."

Baker, 44, of Orange County, N.J., was selling a collection of former Yankees' owner Del Webb's title rings — including 10 from the World Series — that never got the opening bid of \$500,000 and went for \$325,000.

Another seller netted only \$34,000 for Mickey Mantle's baby blue 1949 Plymouth "special deluxe." It had opened at \$100,000.

Todd Chimoss, Baker's business partner, said before the auction that he expected the car to fetch \$600,000 to \$800,000. Mantle

bought the car the year he graduated from high school and signed a Yankees contract.

Brian Elmer, 43, a salesman from Trenton, N.J., was at the auction to sell the second-to-last home run baseball hit in the House That Ruth Built to "pay some bills."

Hit by Yankee center fielder Johnny Damon, the ball went on the block for \$5,000 but only netted a \$4,500 bid, causing Elmer to pull it out of the auction.

"I'd rather have the piece of history for my son," he said of 10-year-old Jake, who was by his side.

The auction included about 40 cartoons by legendary Daily News cartoonist Bill Gallo.

One of them, titled "The Bronx Boy Meets the Kid From Queens," was purchased by Ed Fox, 58, at a bargain price of \$400.

The cartoon, celebrating the first inter-league play between the Yankees and Mets, was expected to sell for \$1,000 to \$2,500.

tmoore@nydailynews.com

ITEMS THAT WERE BOMBERS

Memorabilia that either sold for less than expected or not at all

- The last home run baseball in Yankee Stadium, no sale.
- First World Series trophy: opened at \$100,000, didn't sell.
- Del Webb's title rings: opened at \$500,000, sold for \$325,000.
- Mickey Mantle's 1949 Plymouth: opened at \$100,000, sold for \$34,000.
- Blueprint of the giant letters on Yankee Stadium: opened at \$50,000, sold for \$30,000.
- A painting of Reggie Jackson: opened at \$100,000, sold for \$80,000.