

YANKS HITTING PAYDIRT



Here's the dirt on the Yankee sale:

- More than three tons of dirt was dug out of the old Stadium to make collectibles.
- The Yanks and their agent have rung up \$10 million worth of sales.
- The dirt came from just below the surface, up to two feet down.
- Each item includes less than a half-ounce of dirt encased in a plastic disk (left).

\$10M for soil-venirs

By PAUL THARP

Forget the alchemists turning lead into gold.

They have nothing on the marketers who are turning tons of ordinary dirt from Yankee Stadium into \$10 million and counting.

The dirt, collected before the old ballpark was demolished, has been used in some 360,000 collectibles that were sold to Yankee fans willing to dig deep into their pockets for a smidgen of the old Stadium's sacred soil.

Some of the treasure was scraped from mere inches below the surface.

More was shoveled from two feet down.

The dirt was dug from of the infield, outfield and areas around home plate and the pitcher's mound.

Less than half an ounce was sealed in each of thousands of transparent plastic disks that were artfully inserted into souvenirs such as posters, plaques and paperweights.

More than three tons of the stuff has been dug out so far — and half of it was used in \$10 million worth of products.

And the Yanks and their agent, Steiner Sports Collectibles, will probably score a double play.

The other half of the world's most expensive dirt is being stored in barrels in New Rochelle, awaiting its transformation into keepsakes.

Items that have been flying off the shelves include:

■ Key chains that go for \$20 each.

■ Posters commemorating the nine championships the team won in their former home. They sell for \$150 each.

■ Special player posters whose price depends on the player. Derek Jeter is the most expensive at \$80.

■ Player plaques showing Yankee stars' stats and biggest moments. They sell for \$50 to \$60.

■ Crystal paperweights engraved with milestone dates.

■ Team-signed balls with an order of dirt on the side, selling for \$60.

"We're selling the dirt 20 ways," said Brandon Steiner, founder of Steiner Sports Collectibles. "It's a dream come true for me to have a piece of it."

Because the supply is limited, Steiner is convinced the items will increase in value. But that's not the main reason to buy, he said.

"The real worth to fans is having a piece of history."