

Baseball is back — merchandise selling like hotcakes

棒球回溫 周邊商品熱賣

Baseball is back in fashion and souvenirs of each team are **selling like hotcakes** while sports equipment retailers are promoting autographed gloves and other customized goods.

When a major baseball **bribery** scandal was discovered a few years ago, many players were found to have given games away. This disappointed many fans who no longer wanted to buy tickets to games. With the sharp drop in audiences, business dropped for shops close to the arenas, who had a hard time.

However, these sentiments seem to have disappeared, and according to Taipei County Sports Office statistics, each match at the Hsinchuang Stadium during the first half of this year was watched by between 2,000 and 3,000 people, twice the number during the same period last year. Baseball fever is back again.

Hsu Chen-hu, manager of the New Sun Sports Equipment, says the most direct proof is that the store's sale of souvenirs and **merchandise** for each team is increasing. There are currently four professional baseball teams left, and the biggest draw remains the same as in the past — the battle between the Elephants and the Lions, or Brother Elephants against Uni-President Lions. In

particular, as soon as the Elephants enter the pitch, cheering sticks, souvenir T-shirts and other merchandise sell fast. Recently, however, the number of Sinon Bulls fans has also been on the rise.

In addition to team souvenirs, customized merchandise is also very popular. Hsu says people today like to be different from everyone else and want things that highlight their individual style. Fans of Brother Elephants' Peng Cheng-wen, for example, may want a T-shirt with the text "I Love Chia-chia" or a T-shirt with a photograph with themselves and Peng on. Hsu can sell several hundred of such customized T-shirts every month.

Hsu, who is closing in on 40, is a typical baseball fan. With a unique eye for **investment**, he has collected a lot of Wang Chien-ming merchandise, and although Wang has not performed too well recently, Hsu, who follows the stock investor's advice to buy low, thinks there still is much room for value to go up.

Hsu believes Wang merchandise has a lot of collector potential. Regardless of his performance, he has helped Taiwan create a glorious record in US baseball history that no one will be able to repeat in the short term. Collecting merchandise is therefore also a kind of psychological support.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY PERRY SVENSSON)



Top: Fans of Brother Elephants and Uni-President Lions wave their cheering sticks at a match on Oct. 30 last year.

PHOTO: LIU HSIN-DE, LIBERTY TIMES

Above: Hsu Chen-hu holds up a Wang Chien-ming figure in this photo taken on July 1. Hsu supports Wang and believes that there is a good chance that his Wang souvenirs will increase in value in future.

PHOTO: KUO YEN-HUI, LIBERTY TIMES

最上圖：去年十月三十日，兄弟象和統一獅的球迷在場上揮動加油棒。照片：自由時報記者劉信德攝
上圖：七月一日拍攝的這張照片中，徐振湖手持王建民公仔。他支持王建民，也看好王建民週邊商品未來的增值空間。照片：自由時報記者郭顯慧攝

棒球運動最近有回溫跡象，各球隊紀念商品熱賣，還有運動用品店順勢推出姓名手套等客製化產品。

前幾年發生職棒簽賭案，許多球員被查出打假球，因而傷透許多球迷的心，許多人也不願買票入場，觀眾銳減，附近商家生意慘淡，苦不堪言。

然而，最近這股陰霾似乎有逐漸散去跡象，根據台北縣政府體育處統計，今年上半年，新莊體育場每場比賽觀眾人數平均約兩三千人，比去年同期成長約一倍，顯見棒球熱似乎再度燃起。

新太陽運動用品店經理徐振湖說，棒球熱回溫，最直接的表現是店內各隊紀念商品銷售量暴增，目前職棒剩四隊，票房最好的依舊是傳統戲碼，兄弟對戰統一的「象獅大戰」，尤其只要有兄弟隊出賽，加油棒、紀念T恤和公仔等商品，熱賣到不

行，但最近興農牛隊球迷數量也有後來居上態勢。

除了球隊紀念商品，客製化商品也很受歡迎。徐振湖說，現代人喜歡與眾不同，凸顯個人風格的東西，像兄弟象彭政閔的球迷，可能就會希望在T恤上印製「我愛恰恰」等字樣，或是秀出與彭政閔的合照，類似這種個性化T恤一個月可賣上數百件。

年近四十歲的徐振湖，是位標準的棒球迷，投資眼光獨到的他，收藏許多王建民的周邊商品，雖然這陣子王建民表現不盡理想，但一如股票投資法「逢低買進」，他深信增值空間依舊很大。

徐振湖認為，其實王建民商品十分具有收藏潛力，不管他表現如何，他在美國職棒史上為台灣人留下的輝煌紀錄，短期內恐怕無人能取代，因此收藏商品也是一種精神支持。

(自由時報記者郭顯慧)

TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字

1. bribery /'brʌbəri/ n.

行賄 (xing2 hui4)

例：Several high-level officials are being questioned over bribery allegations. (數名高官因被指控行賄而接受偵訊。)

2. merchandise /'mɜːtɪz,daɪz/ n.

商品 (shang1 pin3)

例：The shopkeeper was fined for selling counterfeit goods. (那名店員因販售假貨被罰款。)

3. investment /ɪn'vestmənt/ n.

投資 (tou2 zi1)

例：I have no idea why Sally thought her car would be a good investment. (我不懂莎莉為何會認為她的車是個很好的投資。)

IDIOM POINT 重要片語

sell like hotcakes 熱銷

If something is **selling like hotcakes**, it's selling very fast. According to the article, baseball souvenirs have sold very well in recent months.

Examples: "While we struggled to sell cola, the homemade lemonade **sold like hotcakes**," or "Despite **selling like hotcakes** in the opening days of the sale, after a few weeks very few people were buying the T-shirts."

若某物「sell like hotcakes」，就表示它非常熱銷。文章中提到，棒球週邊商品這幾個月來十分熱賣。

例如：「我們賣的可樂乏人問津，但自製檸檬水卻大賣」，或是「雖然折扣開始那幾天銷售反應熱烈，但不出幾個星期已經沒什麼人要買這款T恤了」。