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No. 762 home run ball to be auctioned

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By C.J. Moore / MLB.com

DENVER -- Over six months after Barry Bonds' apparent final home run, No. 762, the owner of the baseball came forward on Thursday and announced at a press conference in Denver that he plans to auction the ball online.

Bonds hit the homer on Sept. 5 at Coors Field off a 99-mph fastball thrown by Ubaldo Jimenez that barely cleared the left-field fence and appeared to be interfered with by a fan. Jameson Sutton, sitting in the front row for the first time, was the fan who reached his glove over the fence and then saw the ball fall to the ground.

Sutton, 24, of Boulder, Colo., tossed a ball he had received earlier in the day during batting practice to the side and came away with the Bonds' ball in a three-man scrum. After the hit was ruled a home run by the umpire, security let Sutton return to his seat, where he, along with a crowd of 22,157, watched the Giants win, 5-3, on a rainy Wednesday night.

Sutton has since kept quiet and had the ball at his home in Boulder. He believed Bonds would hit another home run with three weeks left in the season and he'd have just another baseball. But when the season ended and he was the owner of Bonds' final homer of the season, he put the ball in a safety deposit box.

With the possibility of Bonds' retirement, SCP Auctions started a search for the owner of No. 762 and eventually found Sutton. The company, which also auctioned off Bonds' home runs No. 755 and 756 for \$186,750 and \$752,467, respectively, believes No. 762 will draw bids approaching \$1 million.

Todd McFarlane, who paid \$3 million for Mark McGwire's 70th home run ball in 1998 and also purchased Bonds' single-season record 73rd home run ball in 2001 for \$517,500, told the Los Angeles Times last week that he would spend up to \$1 million for No. 762.

Unlike home runs No. 755 and 756, the 762 ball is not marked by Major League Baseball. MLB stopped authenticating Bonds' home run balls after Bonds broke Hank Aaron's record of 755. To prove that Sutton is the rightful owner of No. 762, SCP Auction hired several independent sources to study the film of the scramble for the ball, interview those present and asked Sutton to submit to a polygraph test.

"I knew 100 percent that would be fine," Sutton said. "Because I knew 100 percent that I had it."

Robert Harmon, a Rockies season ticket holder, was one of the three scrambling for the ball. He was interviewed and has agreed to sign an affidavit verifying Sutton got the ball. Harmon originally thought he had come away with Bonds' home run ball, only to find out minutes later that he had the batting practice ball.

"I know that I don't have the ball," Harmon said. "There were two balls in play and, as far as I'm concerned, he's got the ball. To me, there's no doubt."

Harmon did not know Sutton; however, he did know Sutton's parents, David and Debbie, who have been Rockies season-ticket holders since 1993. Harmon takes pictures at Rockies games and has often sent pictures to the Suttons. David Sutton has been battling lung cancer for three years and has been in the hospital since January.

With David's cancer getting worse, Debbie asked Harmon during a telephone conversation they had after the season to send her any photos he had taken during the year.

Several days later, Harmon called Debbie see if she had received the photos, he then found out that her son had the ball. Harmon informed her there were people looking for that ball.

"For them, it's a fairytale come true," Harmon said. "I know Dave and they need all the help they can get."

After Sutton found out the demand for the ball -- which in part started when Granderson Wealth Management Group offered \$15,000 for the ball and sent out press releases that they were interested in the ball -- he came forward.

As for what he will do with the money, Sutton said, "I'm really young still so I don't know. I'll probably take a vacation. It will definitely help out my family."

Sutton said he has not been contacted by Major League Baseball or Bonds. When asked if he would consider giving the ball to Bonds, he said, "If he wants to come bid on it, that's great."

The auction will take place on SCP's Web site, www.scpauctions.com.