

Rocky Mountain News

Sales pitch for Bonds' 762nd HR

By Associated Press

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After snaring the baseball Barry Bonds hit for career homer No. 762, Jameson Sutton stored it in the safest place he could think of — deep inside his closet.

"I didn't tell anyone," he said.

The 24-year-old from Boulder quickly moved the baseball into a safety deposit box after the season was finished, realizing its potential worth. And with Bonds still looking for a place to play this season, Sutton decided to come forward with the ball.

Sutton has hired SCP Auctions to run an online auction that starts March 31 and could fetch as much as \$1 million.

"I thought it would be cool to give it to my grandkids, but it's too important of a ball for me to have it in my house laying around," Sutton said today.

Sutton grabbed Bonds' final homer of last season on Sept. 5 at Coors Field when he extended his arm over the fence. He thought he had it cleanly and then was crunched by two other fans.

"I did what was a weird splits, and saw the ball rolling in front of me," he said.

Sutton already had a batting-practice baseball in his hand that he was given by a member of the Rockies' maintenance crew before the game. He let go of that one and snatched the home run ball.

Robert Harmon, who was taking pictures at the time and was close to Sutton, saw a ball rolling and quickly scooped it up. Turns out, he grabbed the batting practice ball.

"When I went back to my seat, I got a phone call from a friend who thought I had the ball," Harmon said. "This kid came up and said, 'My friend got the baseball.' I was like, 'No, I've got it.' I looked at it and was like, 'Oh (expletive).' I've seen enough baseballs to know what a game ball is and what a practice ball is. He's got the ball. I've got a nice souvenir."

Harmon isn't bitter about losing the pricey baseball to Sutton.

Being a partial season-ticket holder, Harmon has gotten to know Sutton's mom and dad, David and Debbie, who've been ticket holders since the team's inception.

Harmon knows how much the ball can help the family. David Sutton is back in the hospital as he battles cancer.

"For them, it's a fairy tale come true," Harmon said.

Jameson Sutton has already pledged at least half of the ball's proceeds to his parents.

"I just want to help my family," he said. "I'll pay his medical bills, for their house, whatever. I gladly will."

The auction house also handled the sale of Bonds' record-breaking home run ball No. 756, which went for \$752,467.

David Kohler, the president of SCP Auctions, said he's already had people say they'll pay up to \$1 million for Sutton's baseball.

Earlier in the week, local businessman Gregory Anderson made an offer of \$15,000 for the ball. He said he'll take part in the upcoming auction, but doesn't know if he'd bid over \$100,000.

"We would have to feel really comfortable with a bid that high," Anderson said. "There's too much uncertainty."

Bonds' return to baseball also is uncertain. The Giants didn't re-sign the 43-year-old, and the home run king faces perjury and obstruction charges stemming from a steroids investigation. He pleaded not guilty.

If Bonds doesn't return would remain the major league record for career homers for the foreseeable future. Among active players, Sammy Sosa is second with 609.

Bonds hit No. 762 over the left-field fence — the opposite field for the lefty-batting slugger — on a 99-mph fastball by Ubaldo Jimenez.

"This is my first home run ball I've ever caught," Sutton said.

SCP said it authenticated Sutton's ball by studying game films and interviewing fans, including Harmon who will sign an affidavit saying he doesn't have the ball.

But Harmon has no doubt that Sutton possesses the ball.

"It's the ball. There were two balls in play, and I got the practice ball," Harmon said.

Still, SCP had Sutton take a polygraph test, and he passed.

"That result was absolutely 100 percent — Jameson has Barry Bonds' 762nd home run ball," Kohler said.

Asked if he would consider giving the ball back to the slugger, Sutton, who considers himself a big Bonds fan, just smiled.

"If he wants to come bid on it, that would be great," he said.