

# Sign language prevails at Fest

Some Hall of Famers don't like to autograph  
bats, jerseys to line others' pockets

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The Iowa Cubs' Web site told fans headed to the Fan Fest on Friday and Saturday that featured players would not be signing bats or jerseys "because of time constraints."

The reality is, Hall of Famers such as Paul Molitor, Kirby Puckett and Dave Winfield — who all signed autographs at the event — might be obligated contractually not to put their John Henry on such items.

Or they may simply choose not to sign to prevent the resale of such items for profit -the practice of which also might devalue their signatures.

In recent years, with the increased popularity of eBay, it has become easy to turn around and sell an item autographed by a big star for profit.

"Bats and jerseys are premium items," said Nick Parsons, who has been running Midwest Sports Buffet since 1992.

Parsons, who lives in Ripon, Wis., sets up shop at venues such as Fan Fest and also sells his collectibles on eBay.

"It drives the wholesale price up when stars have exclusive agreements with multi-million dollar companies," he said.

Early Sunday morning, an "authentic" Paul Molitor autographed jersey was selling on eBay for \$240, while a bat autographed by the former Milwaukee great was going for around \$150. But those prices can and do go much higher, with jerseys often fetching \$350 and up and bats more than \$200.

An autograph ticket for any of the three Hall members at Fan Fest cost just \$30. So if the Hall members signed the more lucrative items, entrepreneurs might be enticed to put the signed items for sale in their stores or on eBay. For that matter, so might anyone else deciding to make a quick