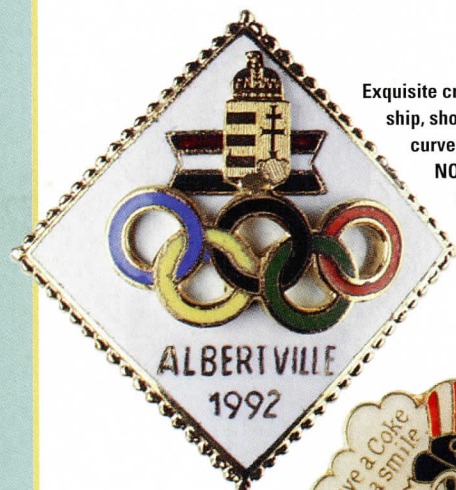


WHAT PINS ARE WORTH

In a nutshell, a pin is worth as much as a person is willing to pay for it at any given time. Its value follows the same "supply and demand" equation upon which most collectibles' values are based. And that can change from day to day and place to place.



Exquisite craftsmanship, shown in this curved Hungarian NOC pin, can increase value.



Rarity can drive price: This discontinued 1984 Sam the Eagle pin (left) was one of the costliest mascot pins ever until counterfeits (above) flooded the market.

Pin prices tend to escalate most rapidly during the Olympic Games, when both pin visibility and trading activity are at their peaks.

Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon occurred at the 1984 Los Angeles Games. About 400 pins of Sam the Eagle holding a Coca-Cola bottle were struck before the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee deemed the image too commercial for a mascot pin. By the Games' end, the pins were selling on the street for upward of \$1,500. (Unfortunately, the frenzy encouraged the production of knockoffs,

promptly devaluing the originals.)

Similarly, pins issued during the Games for a special occasion (such as Lillehammer's Pin of the Day series and heart-shaped guest badges given out on Valentine's Day) tend to quickly become coveted, at least on that given day.

Although there are no written resources that specifically assign values to Olympic Games pins, here are some key characteristics that may affect what someone is willing to buy or trade a pin for:



High demand and limited quantity make Day Pins valuable, like this one from Lillehammer.

media, sponsor, and commemorative.

Age of pin: A pin's value increases with age.

Production level: The smaller the number made, the higher the value.

Condition of pin: Pins with fewer scratches and nicks are usually worth more than others.



Unusual pins, like this be-ribboned 1988 Botswana NOC pin, attract many collectors.

Availability of pin: Can the pin be found at any pin show, or are there only a few in circulation worldwide?

Makeup of pin: Pins made of precious metals, or

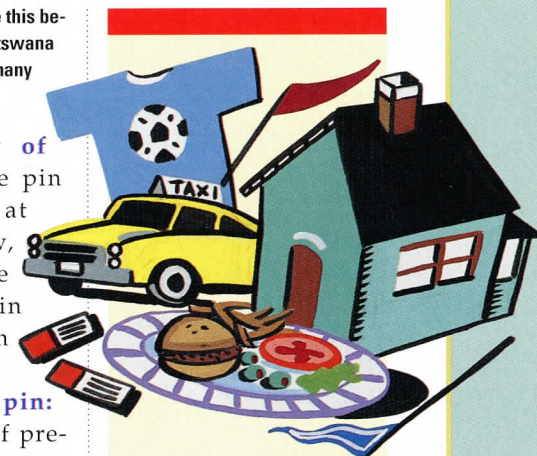
with fine craftsmanship, or with unique features—such as moving parts—tend to be worth more.

Origin of pin: Manufacturers in certain countries—Italy, Hungary, and France, for example—are known for making fine pins.

Dispersal or purpose of pin: Was the pin sold to the general public, or did only VIPs receive it?

Special circumstances: Manufacturing flaws, a change in a pin's design, or something unique regarding a country, team, or athlete may affect the value.

NOC pins representing new countries, like this generic NOC pin from Belarus (1994), are hard to find and highly prized.



WHAT PINS ARE REALLY WORTH

The value of these small pieces of painted metal can be measured another way. During each Olympic Games, pins become an unofficial, universal currency. Attendees use them to buy things, to thank someone, and to repay a favor.

Pinheads have reported bartering their pins for taxi rides, event tickets, and other souvenirs. Sometimes Olympic Games pins are used to elicit special treatment in restaurants, hotels, or even at border crossings. Some savvy traders negotiate *really* big deals: one U.S. collector, for instance, arranged to swap 15,000 Olympic Games pins for a three-week stay in a Lillehammer house during the 1994 Winter Games.

ALLISON SEIFFER