

Auction brings Hall of Famer Ted Williams to NFT market

April 18 2021, by Jimmy Golen

9

Ted Williams

Ted Williams

01/09

For the Love of the Game

.406

"If I was being paid \$30,000 a year, the very least I could do was hit .400."
Ted Williams

This image created by Brazilian illustrator Andre Maciel, known as Black Madre, provided by Leighton Communications, Inc., shows a copy of one of the nine non-fungible token cards of baseball Hall of Famer Ted Williams to go on auction April 19-24, 2021. Non-fungible tokens can be works of art, video clips or even tweets or news articles tied to a digital record—or blockchain—that allows the collector to prove ownership. (Leighton Communications, Inc. via AP)

Teddy Ballgame is about to become Teddy Blockchain.

Hall of Famer Ted Williams is coming to the digital memorabilia market with a release of nine different cards that follow the No. 9's career from skinny rookie to Cooperstown inductee. The collectors' items offered by Williams' daughter are hand drawn by Brazilian illustrator Andre Maciel, known as Black Madre, who created the non-fungible tokens for football star Rob Gronkowski that sold out last month for \$1.6 million.

"I wrote to him. I told him who I was. I said, 'My dad is Ted Williams.' I said, 'Here's what I want to do,'" Claudia Williams said, adding that she didn't know whether Maciel would be familiar with the baseball star.

"For all he knows, I'm just some person reaching out saying, 'Hey, could you make me some NFTs?'" she said. "Just the respect that he showed the art, I know that he knows who Ted Williams is."

Eight cards come in limited editions numbered 1-9, with the ninth—titled "The Splendid Splinter"—a one-of-a-kind release that comes with an autographed bat, three autographed pictures and an Airbnb stay at a house Williams lived in in Vermont. Each of the 73 cards include the digital autograph of the Red Sox slugger, who remains

the last major leaguer to bat .400, hitting .406 in 1941.

The collection also recognizes Williams' achievements as a fishing hall of famer and a fighter pilot who missed parts of five seasons to serve in WWII and the Korean War. Claudia Williams wrote the text on the back of each card.

The [auction begins Monday](#) and runs through Saturday.

"My life's goal is to keep my dad as relevant and inspirational as ever," Claudia Williams said last week in a telephone interview from her Florida home. "I want to leave his legacy behind when his last surviving child is gone."

Non-fungible tokens can be works of art, video clips or even tweets or news articles tied to a digital record—or blockchain—that allows the collector to prove ownership. The [NBA has gotten into NFTs](#) by creating a market called Top Shot, which has more than 800,000 users and at least \$500 million in sales.

Williams said if the auction is successful, she will donate some of the proceeds to the Jimmy Fund, a children's cancer charity that has been a favorite of the Red Sox since her father's playing days.

"It's all about inspiration and honoring my dad," she said. "I am very much my father's daughter: I do not do squat if I don't feel passionate about it."

Williams played 19 years—all for the Red Sox—missing time for the two wars before retiring at the age of 41 in 1960 with a .344 average, 521 home runs and 1,839 RBIs. He was a 19-time All-Star, two-time AL MVP and two-time triple crown winner.

Williams was also a notorious curmudgeon who derided reporters as "Knights of the Keyboard" and refused to tip his cap to the fans. But he was one of the few white players to argue for Negro Leagues players to be included in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Claudia Williams said her father might not have been an early adopter on NFTs, but he encouraged his children to keep up on the latest technology. His book "The Science of Hitting" was ahead of its time. (Williams, who died in 2002, has been frozen in liquid nitrogen at an Arizona cryonics facility in the hopes that medical advances will someday allow him to be brought back to life.)

"Daddy was so about cutting edge," she said. "When he learned about something new, he embraced it. He might say, "... I don't know the first thing about this NFT, but I think it's great.' But he would learn about it, and he would love it."

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