



Sports News

New Technology Gives Fans Visual Record of Autograph Signings

(NAPSA)—When does an everyday marker become an anti-fraud device? A Sharpie marker is a key tool for forgers, but The Upper Deck Co. has turned this otherwise ordinary writing instrument into an innovative high-tech authentication tool that helps guarantee sports fans get real autographs.

Upper Deck is now fighting fire with fire with the introduction of PenCam, a cool groundbreaking autograph authentication device that combines a pen and video camera to document autographed items. Backed by testimonials from high profile athletes such as Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Ken Griffey Jr., Peyton Manning and Kevin Garnett, Upper Deck's innovation uses a tiny video camera at the end of a pen to digitally record an autograph as it is being signed on a piece of memorabilia. The result is a permanent, airtight record that protects both athletes and fans from forgeries.

"For our customers, PenCam is the next best thing to actually witnessing the autograph themselves. Seeing is believing," said Richard McWilliam, Upper Deck's founder and chairman.

One of today's most highly coveted signatures is that of Woods, who had this to say about the authentication tool: "I really don't appreciate people using forgeries to sell a product and make money off that product. I feel that's immoral. Using the PenCam further authenticates the product. Obviously Upper Deck has the five-step process of authenticity, but this adds to it and makes it much more special and, in essence, a little more intimate."

Known for innovation, Upper Deck uses the PenCam technique to take the company's widely recognized authentication process to a higher level through digital tech-



Photo Credit: Marissa Roth



nology. Proprietary circuitry and software are used to record the video footage and save it as a digital file. This record is then provided to the consumer on a CD-ROM along with a trail of documentation that is part of Upper Deck's authentication process. Consumers can also access this information about their memorabilia by logging on to the company's Web site—www.upperdeck.com—and entering the item's serial number.

The heart of Upper Deck's five-step authentication process is that a company representative witnesses every single autograph, an element that will continue with PenCam. Over the last nine years, Upper Deck representatives have witnessed nearly a half million autographs by some of the world's leading athletes including mega star Jordan. He is a favorite target among forgers because of the immense popularity of his autograph, according to FBI agent Tim Fitzsimmons, a case agent on Operation Bullpen, the FBI's sting operation to rid the collectibles industry of forgeries.

Bryant, who has also used Upper Deck's new hi-tech authentication technique, says PenCam amazes him. "I think it shows commitment to their customers to ensure that they're buying a real product. What they're doing is really different; it's pioneer," said the L.A. Lakers hoops star.