



SPORTS MEMORABILIA

A HIDDEN MARKETING GEM

By Don Strouf

How many times a day do we hear that “I only spent \$10 on this print so I don’t want expensive framing?”

The custom framing industry is always changing and there is often a fine line between what people want to spend and what they are willing to spend. However, I have found that when it comes to sports memorabilia framing, the only thing the customer says is, “I want a really nice framing that everyone will be jealous over.”

I do a lot of framing for parents of school age kids that are in sports. So every year I will usually pick one child and contact the parents to get permission to take photos off of their social media and frame them up nicely. In return for letting me use the photos, after about 6 months of displaying the piece in my shop, I give it to them, free of charge. Usually the parent shares pictures of the piece with other parents who start flooding in wanting their child’s photos done also, at full price. Every once in a while I will make the framing special such as when the local high school football team won state two years in a row, I ended up framing 30 jerseys each year. And when the Willamette Little League made it to the Little League World Series and I framed their jerseys along with memorabilia from their trip.

In the custom framing business we see seasonal framing such as graduations, weddings, etc. However, sports framing is a year round business, whether they are framing stuff to get ready for the big game party at their house, or in

the off season they may have more time and money to do it right. My frame shop sees about 30% of my business as sports framing. I do get referrals from other frame shops in my area telling me that they aren’t really into sports so they send their customers my way. We live in a world right now that pretty much anything can be found on the Internet. So to get inspiration for projects I sometimes Google the athlete or team to get to know them better. You don’t have to be a big sports fan to get part of the business; you just have to know how to use a computer.

Before CMCs came into the framing industry, if you wanted to do something unique you either had to learn the craft of hand carving or find someone with calligraphy skills. But now we have a lot of different options with the click of a mouse. Whether you are recreating a team logo, tracing the jersey for the cutout, or simply adding text on the matboard, your imagination is your limit of what you can do. My suggestion is to not overdo it. We need to remember that the subject matter should always be the star of the framing. That can sometimes be difficult when the customer sees some of the samples in the shop and they want to add everything they see into their framing.

Of all the sports framing I have done, only about 10% has to do with local pro sports teams. The best thing you can do is contact your local high school and talk to the athletic director. They usually have a few old jerseys lying around that they will be more than happy to let you have.



● Saunders jersey with memorabilia from the Willamette Little League World Series trip.

One of my favorite things to use in sports framing are football and basketball textured mats. They have perfected them so well that I even have pro football players asking if I got the football leather from Nike. I learned early on with using these mats is that less is more. A 3" mat with no cutouts or lettering tends to lose its appeal, so

I cut into the borders with designs or lettering.

It was important to use a more simple black and silver in the Raiders piece because of all the insets and detail pieces. I traced each patch and inset them into the mat helping give it a wow factor. So many times I see framers just cutting rectangles or circular cuts around patches and pins. Going the extra step will not only make it look amazing, but it will set you apart from the other framers in your area. A few sample pieces in your shop may attract a whole new clientele.

Social media is an excellent avenue to reach new sports framing customers. Every high school sport has its own Facebook page whether it's run by the school or the parents. Add yourself and your business to as many groups as possible and start posting pics or



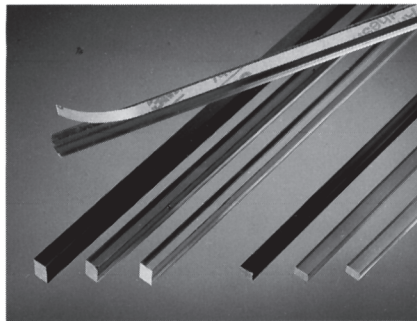
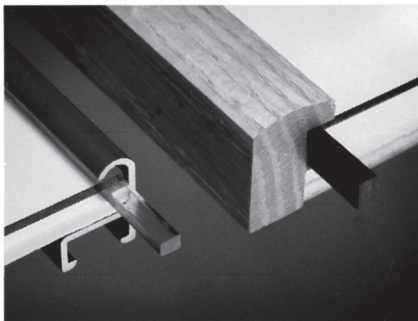
● Cutting Oregon Ducks team name, player and number help balance the photo in this presentation.

framing specials. You will get a great response. Most of them will think that it's inexpensive and will choke at the price you give them. Don't get discouraged. Hold your price firm because I can tell you that sometimes it takes a lot more time in the beginning to do projects as you learn the tricks of the trade. I can't tell you how many times they have brought in a ready-made frame with everything and asked me to complete it as they just can't figure it out. I charge accordingly and upsell the UV glass, matboard, etc. In the end they spend a lot more than they originally had planned, and they're happy to do it because they already tried and couldn't do it themselves.

The other thing I did was add a vinyl cutting machine and a small wide format printer. My original plan was if the framing business died down during Covid I could fall back on printing services and vinyl lettering and designs. But thankfully the framing has not slowed down and I find myself adding the printing and vinyl into a lot more of the sports framing, whether adding a football field in the background, or creating sports logos a lot smaller than I can with my Valiani Nexus CMC.

My customer wanted the team's

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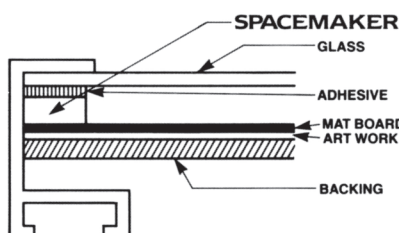


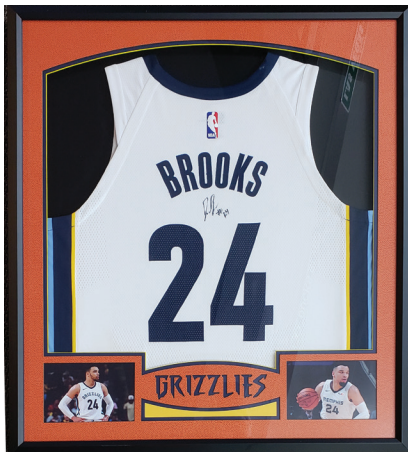
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● A leather textured mat needs cutouts or lettering to break up the boarder pattern.

new logo on his Tampa Bay Buccaneers jersey and the old logo placed over the sleeves as though they were actually on the jersey. It took me a little while to figure out what I needed to do, but from a distance it they appear as sleeves, but are matboard pieces with vinyl logos. The team name is also vinyl lettering. The customer picked it

up the day before the Super Bowl as he was having a Super Bowl party at his house. The Buccaneers won and I'm taking full credit as superstition runs high in the sports world, had I not got it done in time, I'm almost sure they would have lost.

It was about 10 years ago that I realized what a huge market sports framing was. Since then I have met Olympians, local college athletes, pro athletes and coaches at every level. There is not a week that goes by that I don't get a message from someone that was referred to me by one of them. Just remember, no matter where you live you will always have a market for sports framing whether it's the players, parents, or just fans. And the best part of it is that a lot of the championships are right around the first of the year when it slows down a little in the cus-



● Barrett Tampa Bay Buccaneers jersey with accented use of cut vinyl logos.

tom framing industry. Be creative and have fun in your designs as you will find that most sports fans are a lot of fun to deal with as well! **PFM**



Don Strouf

Don has been framing for over 35 years and just celebrated the 6th year anniversary of Ducko's Custom Framing 2.0 on July 20, 2021.



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