

THE ART OF TRADING

Anyone can trade pins. The trick is to do it with finesse and to build an outstanding collection. Plot your Atlanta strategy now.



SEE AND BE SEEN

Rule number one: Let 'em know you're ready to deal. It's hard to miss the traders displayed by Kjerstin Björkman of Valtournanche, Italy.

BEFORE THE GAMES

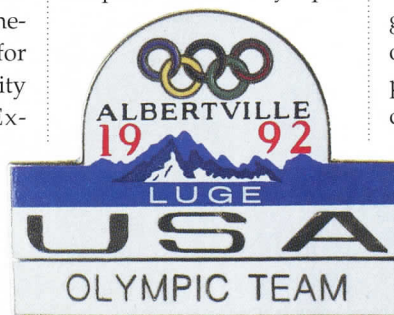
Start by preparing your trader stock, which should include duplicates of pins from your permanent collection and any other pins you're willing to part with. It's best to take a variety of traders, even if you collect just one particular type of pin—sponsor, NOC (National Olympic Committee) pins, commemorative, or whatever. Although some collectors prefer to trade like pins for like pins (media for media, mascot for mascot, etc.), the majority are more flexible. Exchanging a trader for a pin outside your specialty may later bring you a pin you really desire.

Also consider buying pins now that you think might be hot at

the Atlanta Games. For example, 1992 U.S. basketball "Dream Team" pins were quite popular in Barcelona.

Next, decide how best to display your traders. Collectors who spend a lot of their time at the Coca-Cola Official Olympic Pin Trading Center or other high-traffic spots often affix pins to towels, scarves, cloth-covered boards, and the like. Those who move around a lot and trade off the cuff should wear pins on hats, vests, or other articles of clothing; this is also the best way to advertise yourself as a collector.

And plan to leave room in your luggage for a fan pack, backpack, or a pin-pal (a cloth suitcase for pins). These provide excellent temporary storage for the keepers you acquire at the Olympic



It's a real thrill to trade with an athlete for his or her team pin, such as this USOC one.



Trading Central: Coca-Cola's official center at Lillehammer.

Games. Equally important: Jot down your name, address, and phone number on small slips of paper to hand out to fellow collectors; that way you can continue trading by mail after the Games. Some collectors have business cards printed, complete with a mention of the types of pins and other collectibles they seek.

Finally, establish a goal—such as to collect one NOC pin from each participating nation. Some collectors also suggest setting financial limits for yourself. Although trading is more popular than buying at the Games, some pins do sell for fairly sizable sums. (Prices typically drop after the Games,

so be patient.) And keep in mind that pin trading is only part of the Games experience. Meeting people from around the world can provide just as much fun.

AT THE GAMES

Unabashed collectors will make trades on airplanes, in airports, at rest stops, and at any other point en route to the host city. The approach is simple: "Want to trade?" usually suffices. Gesturing often works well when dealing with collectors who don't speak your language.

In the host city, expect collectors to seek you out at events, on public transportation, and in hotels and restaurants—even in bathrooms. Wear pins, and you'll attract collectors.

Among the prime pin-trading locations are the Olympic venues. In Atlanta, the Olympic Stadium area promises to see great trading activity of all kinds. The same goes for venues of other popular sports, such as swimming



Coca-Cola Official Pin Trading Center pin.



Generic NOC pin from the Seychelles features twin marlins.

and gymnastics.

Today's pin seekers inevitably gather at the Coca-Cola Official Olympic Pin Trading Center, where traders can use the space to display their offerings, and admission is free.

If you collect a certain type of pin, scout out appropriate locations in advance. NOC aficionados generally gather near the Olympic Village, where athletes and coaches (the main sources of NOC pins) stay. If you don't have accreditation to get into the Village itself, try staking out the main entrance and routes leading to and from the area. Remember that many athletes arrive days before the start of the Games, so collectors of NOC pins who show up ahead of the crowds will have an advantage. (But please respect the needs of the athletes; they're the reason for the Games.)

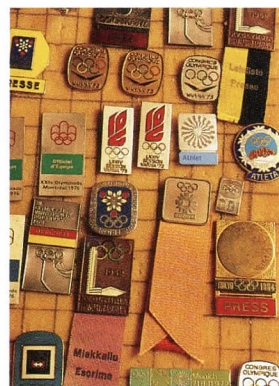
Those who collect media pins—which are usu-

ally most plentiful early in the Games—might try their luck outside the international media center and the broadcast center. If the host city has provided bus transportation for the media, hunt for designated bus stops. Some experts suggest finding out, if you can, the schedule of activities planned for guests of the major media and sponsors. VIPs are often supplied with a cache of pins, so knowing their ETA at a particular spot could lead to a coveted trade.



USOC souvenir pin (1996).

Expect to acquire a few that'll leave you baffled. Sports-federation pins, for instance, may carry little more than a few cryptic initials, and recognizing



Pins and badges on display at the 13th Annual Lake Placid Olympic Pin Festival.



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unfamiliar foreign media pins can be tough. In cases like this, ask collectors you trust for their advice.

As you collect pins for your permanent collection, stash them somewhere until you can return to your lodgings and safely store them. Your "big guns"—those rare traders you expect to exchange for something special—should also be kept separate. Showing your best pins too early in a trade could decrease your leverage. If you collect enough keepers that you run out of pins to trade, you may well have to buy a batch to keep going. Try the Pin Trading Center or the many retail locations that

will carry authentic pins.

AFTER THE GAMES

Just because the Closing Ceremony is over doesn't mean trading has to come to a close as well. If you're still looking for specific pins after the Games—and who isn't?—consider running an ad in one of several Olympic Games pin-club newsletters (see "Resources," page 96). If you have several dozen pins for trade (or sale), you might offer a list to anyone who sends you a self-addressed, stamped envelope. And don't forget to keep in touch with collectors you met at the Games.

TRADING PLACES

Pin deals know no age limits; above, Lillehammer resident Tina Elvestrand receives a new trophy from a pin friend, Terje Amundsen.

DOS AND DON'TS

ALWAYS

- Trade in a calm, friendly manner. A pushy, overbearing demeanor turns off other traders.
- Be fair. If you come across a must-have, be prepared to cough up an equally good pin.
- Make personal connections. Eye-to-eye contact and a smile go a long way.
- Encourage young traders. Take a moment to give advice to or make a small trade with kids, even if they have little to offer in exchange.
- Collect stories. Pinning a memory to a pin makes them both more special.

NEVER

- Interrupt a trade in progress. Allow the traders to conclude their negotiations.
- Wear pins you won't trade. If you consider a pin part of your permanent collection, either leave it at home or stash it out of sight.
- Trade with someone you don't trust. Not only might you give up a diamond for a rhinestone, but your reputation with other traders might suffer by association.
- Pass off fakes. If you've landed a knockoff, eat the loss and swallow your pride.