

The 1841-O Baseball Die Crack Reverse Half dollar by Dennis Fortier, LSCC #2019

There are three things that make a variety popular. The first is that it is an “eyeball variety”, meaning you can see it without using a loupe. Another is a really cool variety name. The third, that isn’t always the case, is rarity. When you have the first two and the third, you really have something that collectors (even those that don’t normally collect varieties) go for!

This month we are connecting the dots between coins and baseball, so the 1841-O Liberty Seated Half Dollar Baseball Die Crack (BBDC) is a natural fit. In the first paragraph we discussed what makes a popular variety. Well, the 1841-O BBDC hits it out of the park (pun intended) in all categories. You might say it’s a grand slam... Sorry, I couldn’t help myself.

Wildly popular with half dollar enthusiasts, its rarity validates its eyeball appeal and name recognition. To make this variety even more exciting there is a first die marriage and a remarriage! Together, they are a collective Rarity 5 (31-75 estimated total extent).

Okay, so for the uninitiated, why the fancy name? Very simply the die crack on the reverse of WB-2 resembles the unique stitching on a baseball.



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As I stated in the third paragraph there is a first marriage and a remarriage. In the Liberty Seated series remarriages are scarce, but not exactly rare. There was always a small chance after the first pairing the coiner could grab the same two dies to make more coins after one or more of the dies had been used in between. The trick for our great Liberty Seated numismatists is noticing the die progression, or deterioration.



1841-O Baseball Die Crack WB-2 and WB-2R (Remarriage)

The 1841-O WB-2 Baseball die crack has a medium size mintmark. The key diagnostic for the remarriage is the weak foot support under Liberty's foot. The 1841-O is a better date overall with a mintage of just 401,000. For further attribution details, see Bill Bugert's "A Register of Liberty Seated Half Dollar Die Varieties, Volume III, New Orleans Branch Mint, 1840-O to 1853-O NA", pages 61-63. (Photos courtesy of Bill Bugert)



[Editor:] Shown on the next few pages is a relatively new discovered example of the 1841-O (WB-2R) Liberty Seated Half Dollar with "Baseball Die Cracks" reverse.

This piece is likely the latest die state known to-date (VLDS - Very Late Die State) as the die cracks/breaks have progressed further than previously attributed by Bill Bugert in his reference.

From a private collection, this coin was professionally graded by PCGS as AU53. The pronounced die cracks and grade of this specimen makes attribution of all the diagnostics easy to view.

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Note: The reverse is slightly Rotated Counter-Clockwise.

There is also an 1840-O WB-9 Half Dollar with an identified "Baseball Die Crack" similar reverse.

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