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Biography

George Herman Ruth Jr. was born on February 6, 1895 in Baltimore, Maryland to parents George Sr. and Kate. George Jr. was one of eight children, although only he and his sister Mamie survived. George Jr.'s parents worked long hours, leaving little time to watch over him and his sister. The lack of parental guidance allowed George Jr. to become a bit unruly, often skipping school and causing trouble in the neighborhood. When George Jr. turned 7 years old, his parents realized he needed a stricter environment and therefore sent him to the St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys, a school run by a brotherhood of laymen from an order of the Xaverian Brothers. St. Mary's provided a strict and regimented environment that helped shape George Jr.'s future. Not only did George Jr. learn vocational skills, but he developed a passion and love for the game of baseball.

Brother Matthias, one of the laymen at St. Mary's, took an instant liking to George Jr. and became a positive role model and father-like figure to George Jr. while at St. Mary's. Brother Matthias also happened to help George Jr. refine his baseball skills, working tirelessly with him on hitting, fielding and pitching skills. George Jr. became so good at baseball that the Brothers invited Jack Dunn, owner of the Baltimore Orioles, to come watch George Jr. play. Dunn was obviously impressed, as he offered a contract to George Jr. in February 1914 after watching him for less than an hour. Since George Jr. was only 19 at the time, Dunn had to become George's legal guardian in order to complete the contract. Upon seeing George Jr. for the first time, the Orioles players referred to him as "Jack's newest babe", and thus the most famous nickname in American sports history was born. Thereafter, George Herman Ruth Jr. was known as the Babe.

The Babe performed well for Dunn and the Orioles, leading to the sale of Babe to the Boston Red Sox by Dunn. While Babe is most known for his prodigious power as a slugger, he started his career as a pitcher, and a very good one at that. In 1914, Babe appeared in five games for the Red Sox, pitching in four of them. He won his major league debut on July 11, 1914. However, due to a loaded roster, Babe was optioned to the Red Sox minor league team, the Providence Grays, where he helped lead them to the International League pennant. Babe became a permanent fixture in the Red Sox rotation in 1915, accumulating an 18-8 record with an ERA of 2.44. He followed up his successful first season with a 23-12 campaign in 1916, leading the league with a 1.75 ERA. In 1917, he went 24-13 with a 2.01 ERA and a staggering 35 complete games in 38 starts. However, by that time, Babe had displayed enormous power in his limited plate appearances, so it was decided his bat was too good to be left out of the lineup on a daily basis. As a result, in 1918, the transition began to turn Babe into an everyday player. That year, he tied for the major-league lead in homeruns with 11, and followed that up by setting a single season home run record of 29 dingers in 1919. Little did he know that the 1919 season would be his last with Boston. On December 26, 1919, Babe was sold to the New York Yankees and the two teams would never be the same again.

After becoming a New York Yankee, Babe's transition to a full-time outfielder became complete. Babe dominated the game, amassing numbers that had never been seen before. He changed baseball from a grind it out style to one of power and high scoring games. He re-wrote the record books from a hitting standpoint, combining a high batting average with unbelievable power. The result was an assault on baseball's most hallowed records. In 1920, he bested the homerun record he set in 1919 by belting a staggering 54 homeruns, a season in which no other player hit more than 19 and only one team hit more than Babe did individually. But Babe wasn't done, as his 1921 season may have been the greatest in MLB history. That season, he blasted a new record of 59 homeruns, drove in 171 RBI, scored 177 runs, batted .376 and had an unheard of .846 slugging percentage. Babe was officially a superstar and enjoyed a popularity never seen before in professional baseball. With Babe leading the way, the Yankees became the most recognizable and dominant team in baseball, setting attendance records along the way. When the Yankees moved to a new stadium in 1923, it was appropriately dubbed "The House that Ruth Built".

Babe's mythical stature grew even more in 1927 when, as a member of "Murderer's Row", he set a new homerun record of 60, a record that would stand for 34 years. During his time with the Yankees, Babe ignited the greatest dynasty in all of American sport. Prior to his arrival, the Yankees had never won a title of any kind. After joining the Yankees prior to the 1920 season, Babe helped the Yankees capture seven pennants and four World Series titles. The 1927 team is still considered by many to be the greatest in baseball history. Upon retiring from the Boston Braves in 1935, Babe held an astonishing 56 major league records at the time, including the most revered record in baseball... 714 homeruns.

In 1936, the Baseball Hall of Fame was inaugurated and Babe was elected as one of its first five inductees. During the fall of 1946, it was discovered that Babe had a malignant tumor on his neck, and his health began to deteriorate quickly. On June 13, 1948, his jersey number "3" was retired by the Yankees during his last appearance at Yankee Stadium. Babe lost his battle with cancer on August 16, 1948. His body lay in repose in Yankee Stadium, with his funeral two days later at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. In all, over 100,000 people lined up and paid their respects to the Babe.

Despite passing over 60 years ago, Babe still remains the greatest figure in major league baseball, and one of the true icons in American history. The Babe helped save baseball from the ugly Black Sox scandal, and gave hope to millions during The Great Depression. He impacted the game in a way never seen before, or since. He continues to be the benchmark by which all other players are measured. Despite last playing nearly 75 years ago, Babe is still widely considered the greatest player in Major League Baseball history.