

This Day in History... August 11, 1929

Babe Ruth Becomes First Player to Hit 500 Home Runs

Hitting the first pitch he saw, Babe Ruth made history on August 11, 1929, becoming the first player in Major League Baseball history to hit 500 home runs.

Born in Baltimore, George Herman "Babe" Ruth went on to become perhaps the greatest baseball player in sports history. He began his baseball career in 1914 as a pitcher, but showing even more talent at bat, he later became an outfielder. By the time he joined the New York Yankees in 1920, he had already gained a reputation as one of the greatest hitters in the game.

Ruth possessed a flamboyant playing style and became immensely popular with fans and players alike. This was no more evident than in 1923, when the new Yankee Stadium was nicknamed "the House That Ruth Built." Crowds packed the stadium game after game, to see what great feats Ruth would accomplish that day.



Babe Ruth stamp from the Celebrate the Century Series

Possibly the most successful season Ruth had was 1927, as part of the legendary "Murderer's Row." That year Ruth batted .356 and brought in 164 runs. Also in 1927, he hit 60 home runs, more homers than any other team in the league and a record that would stand for over thirty years.

But it would be the 1929 season that would bring one of Ruth's greatest accomplishments. By August of that year, he had racked up an unprecedented 499 home runs. Prior to his game at Cleveland's League Park on August 11, the Babe approached the field's police chief. He told the chief that he would hit his 500th home run that day and wanted to keep the ball.

True to his word, Ruth hit Willis Hudlin's first pitch in his first at-bat high over the right field wall onto Lexington Avenue. As the game continued, the park police rushed to the street to find the lucky fan. Eventually they found young Jake Geiser and asked for the ball. When his friend suggested that Jake might want to keep the ball, the police and Cleveland team secretary offered to take him to the



Issued for the 50th anniversary of the All-Star Game.

Yankee dugout to meet the Babe. There, Ruth offered Jake a signed ball for the one he'd hit. Jake obliged and Ruth also gave him \$20.

Three years later Ruth had another memorable home run. It occurred during the 1932 World Series at Chicago's Wrigley Field. Before hitting the ball, he famously reached his arm out, possibly pointing where he planned to hit the ball. Whether Ruth actually indicated his intentions to the taunting, lemon-throwing Wrigley Field crowd has been widely debated for years. However, it made for good headlines, and added to Ruth's already legendary reputation.



Yankee Stadium, also known as the "House that Ruth built."

Over the course of his career, Ruth hit 714 home runs, a record that stood until 1974, when Hank Aaron broke it. Barry Bonds was the only other player to hit more than Aaron. As of 2025, only 28 players have hit more than 500 home runs, but Ruth has the distinction of being the first.

Not only did Ruth set the standard for home runs in nearly every year he played, he also set many other records, including 2,056 career walks and 72 games in which he hit two or more home runs. He even hit three home runs in a single World Series game twice.



Ruth was selected as #2 (after Lou Gehrig) for the Legends of baseball issue.



Wrigley Field was the site of Ruth's famed 1932 called shot.

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