

## This Day in History... August 20, 1938

### Lou Gehrig Hits Record 23rd Grand Slam

Stepping up to bat in the first inning with the bases loaded, Lou Gehrig hit the 23rd grand slam of his career on August 20, 1938.

Born in New York City in 1903, Henry Louis Gehrig was the son of German immigrants who'd just moved to America a few years prior. Gehrig was a gifted athlete as a child, and his mother worked extra jobs to provide him with the best possible future.

Gehrig went on to study engineering at Columbia University while playing fullback on the school's football team. He also pitched for the baseball team, which nicknamed him Columbia Lou. But Gehrig's strength at the bat earned him a spot on the Yankees roster in April 1923, the same year Yankee Stadium opened. Gehrig used his \$1,500 signing bonus to buy his parents a nice house in the suburbs.

Gehrig made his major league debut that June and the following year replaced the aging first baseman. That marked the start of his impressive 2,130 consecutive game streak – a record that remained unbroken until 1995. Many sportswriters have used the word “durable” to describe Gehrig. Even his nickname, “The Iron Horse,” implied stability.

Gehrig's career was full of incredible accomplishments. He set an American League record in 1931 with 184 runs batted in (RBIs), hit four home runs in one game in 1932, and earned the 1934 Triple Crown with 49 home runs, a .363 average, and 165 RBIs.

On a team with giants like Babe Ruth, Gehrig was a quiet and unassuming player. His teammates respected him all the more for playing through the incredible pain that marked his later years.

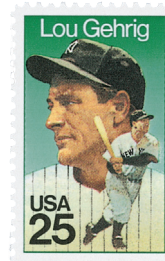
During the 1938 season, Gehrig was struggling. Though his health was beginning to fail, his statistics were higher than average in the second half of the season. Then on August 20, 1938, Gehrig etched another milestone into baseball history. Playing at Yankee Stadium against the Philadelphia Athletics, Gehrig connected for his record-setting 23rd career grand slam. The towering blast came in the first inning off pitcher Buck Ross, sending the ball deep into right field and clearing the bases. It was vintage Gehrig: calm under pressure, unshakable at the plate, and delivering in the most dramatic way possible. At

the time, he was already suffering from the first hidden signs of the illness that would later end his career, making the moment even more poignant in hindsight. His slam powered the Yankees to a 5–1 win and cemented his reputation as one of the most clutch hitters in baseball.

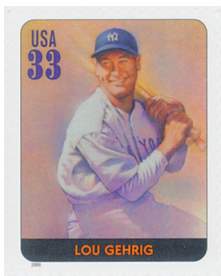
The following year, Gehrig's career was cut short when he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, which is commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. On July 4, 1939, some 61,000 people attended “Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day” at Yankee Stadium. In his stirring speech, Gehrig said, “... today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”

Gehrig remained active in the community until his death in 1941. The tradition of retiring a player's uniform began when Gehrig left the game in 1939. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in a special election that year.

The grand slam record stood as one of Gehrig's signature achievements and became part of the legend surrounding his consistency and power. For decades, no one came close to his mark of 23 grand slams, which showcased his ability to rise to the occasion when the game was on the line. Finally, in 2013—75 later—Alex Rodriguez of the Yankees broke Gehrig's long-standing record by hitting his 24th grand slam. Still, Gehrig's achievement on that August afternoon in 1938 remains a defining symbol of his greatness, a reminder of a ballplayer who combined power, discipline, and quiet determination in a way that few others have ever matched.



*Issued at the 50th anniversary ceremony of the Baseball hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.*



*Issued for the Legends of baseball set.*



*Stamp features an image based on a vintage postcard of Yankee Stadium.*

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