

This Day in History... September 30, 1927

Babe Ruth's 60th Home Run

On September 30, 1927, Babe Ruth became the first baseball player in US history to hit 60 home runs. His record would stand for 34 years, but it remains a historic moment in sports history.

Ruth, and the Yankees as a team, were having a good season in 1927. The legendary Murderer's Row, consisting of Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri, Earle Combs, Waite Hoyt, and Herb Pennock, led what some have called the greatest baseball team in history to a then-record 110 wins.

Years earlier, in 1921, Ruth had hit a record 59 home runs and doubted he'd be able to beat that. He said, "I don't suppose I'll ever break that 1921 record. To do that, you've got to start early, and the pitchers have got to pitch to you. I don't start early, and the pitchers haven't really pitched to me in four seasons. I get more bad balls to hit than any other five men... and fewer good ones."

For much of the season, Ruth and teammate Lou Gehrig were in a heated home run race. By mid-season, Gehrig was ahead of Ruth, leading many to consider him the favorite. But Gehrig's pace slowed, and Ruth surpassed him; Gehrig would end the season with 47 home runs.

Ruth hit well throughout September and scored his 58th and 59th home runs on September 29 against the Washington Senators. On September 30, the second-to-last game of the season, the Yankees faced the Senators again at Yankee Stadium with about 10,000 fans in attendance. The fans, the Yankees, and the Senators, all knew history could be made.

The Senators' pitcher, Tom Zachary, had given up two home runs to Ruth earlier in the season. In his first at-bat in the first inning, Ruth walked on four straight pitches. He hit singles in the fourth and sixth innings. Then in the bottom of the eighth, the game was tied 2-2 with one out. With the count 1-1, Ruth fired the ball down the right field line, landing about 10 rows deep in the bleachers.



At the time of his retirement, Ruth held several records, including 714 career home runs.

around slowly, touched each bag firmly and carefully, and when he imbedded his spikes in the rubber disk to record officially Homer 60 hats were tossed into the air, papers were torn up and tossed liberally and the spirit of celebration permeated the place." Another reported recalled, "The crowd was small, the ovation deafening." Reportedly, when Ruth went into the clubhouse after the game, he exclaimed "Sixty! Count 'em, 60! Let's see some other [player] match that."

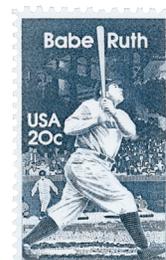
Opposing pitcher Zachary recalled the historic event years later, saying, "We all knew he was going for a record. And the first time he came at bat I yelled at him he'd better start swinging at everything because he wasn't going to get a good pitch all day. There's a ballgame that has to be won and I don't want to walk him if I can help it. I threw him the best pitch I had, with the most on it. Well, it was a big wallop. It went up and out but close to the line. As soon as I saw it, I started hollering 'foul' – it was too late to do anything else. I've been wishing ever since I'd

stuck that pitch in his ear." When the two men met years later as Ruth was being honored at Yankee Stadium, Ruth shook Zachary's hand and asked, "Are you still claiming that ball was foul?"

Truck driver Joe Forner was the lucky fan to retrieve the ball. Hat merchant Truly Warner had promised to give the lucky fan who got the ball \$100, and Forner quickly took him up on the offer. Years later, after Warner died, his son donated the ball to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, where it has remained on display in the Babe Ruth: His Life and Legend exhibit.

Ruth's record would stand for 34 years before fellow Yankee Roger Maris broke it and scored 61 home runs on October 1, 1961, the final day of that year's baseball season. The baseball commissioner said Maris's record would have an asterisk because the season was longer at that time, so he had more at-bats. However, the asterisk was eventually removed.

Maris held the record for 37 years before being broken in 1998 by Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, though their records were brought into question over their use of steroids. Then on September 28, 2022, Yankee Aaron Judge became the first American League player since Roger Maris to hit 61 home runs.



Stamp issued for the 50th anniversary of the first All-Star Game, which Ruth participated in.



Ruth's 60 home runs was more homers than any other team in the league.



Ruth's 60th home run ball is on display at the Baseball Hall of Fame. Baseballs signed by the legendary slugger have sold for over \$350,000!

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