

The Sultan of Swat: Babe Ruth - Part I

Lead: Into the game of baseball, darkened by scandal, was breathed a burst of fresh air by a big, hard-driving, hard-hitting man known by the name Babe.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: George Herman Ruth, Jr. was born the son of a saloon keeper in Baltimore, 1895. Even as a child he was loud and brash and pushy and most people liked him. His internal energy drove him to constant activity which in turn was invariably getting him into trouble. He played hooky from school, drank beer and whiskey lifted from his father's bar, and was such trouble that his parents finally sent him to St. Mary's School, part industrial training institute, part reform school for boys in trouble.

The students who called themselves inmates at St. Mary's were taught a trade. Ruth became a pretty good tailor and later in life, when he could have bought a dozen silk shirts at a clip, would sit at the machine and mend his old ones. However, it was at the Catholic School run by the Xaverian Brothers, that Ruth excelled mostly in baseball. He was the standout player and could catch, pitch, and hit. By the time he left in February, 1914, he had caught the attention of the manager of the, at that time minor league, Baltimore Orioles, who signed him to a professional contract. In his first game at spring training, Ruth hit a

homerun. From that time on he was famous, increasingly known as Babe, called that by his fellow players because of his youth.

In two decades of professional baseball, Ruth set record after record, many of which stood for decades. He was an excellent physical specimen and even in the later years, when we gained weight, he could move with a profound grace. From 1926 to 1937 in the middle of his 30s he had his strongest hitting years averaging 50 homers per year.

Babe Ruth was a powerful personality and in the 1920s when members of the Chicago White Sox were determined to have conspired with gamblers to throw the World Series for cash payments, a case can be made that Ruth's presence and reputation helped re-habilitate the game of baseball, an institution in deep turmoil. Next time: The Called Shot.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Creamer, Robert. *Babe: The Legend Comes to Life*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2015.

Creamer, Robert. "Rutholotry, or Why Everyone Loves the Babe," *Smithsonian* 25 (11, February, 1995), 68-78.

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