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## **The Babe Ruth Story – The Fierce Rivalry Of The Red Sox And The Yankees**

**By FR Penn**

Near the end of the 1919 season, Harry Frazee, then owner of the Boston Red Sox, decided to sell a group of his star players to the New York Yankees. Among them was George Herman Ruth, also known affectionately as "Babe". Ruth's career reflects the change in strategy and the shift in dominance from pitching to hitting at this time.

Babe Ruth had a reputation for being one of the fiercest "leftys" to ever take the mound. It was soon discovered that he wasn't too bad with a bat either, and Ruth became the most celebrated and successful player in Boston. He was practically an institution. When many Bostonians awoke on January 6, 1920, and opened their morning newspapers, they mourned the fact that an icon had been sold to New York. The Babe was gone.

Boston did not seem to be able to recover from this catastrophe until the 2004 World Series, when the "Curse of the Bambino" was finally put to rest after 86 years. From 1903, when the Red Sox were established, until 1920, the club had appeared in five World Series, and won every one of them.

In the 1916 and 1918 World Series, Babe Ruth set a record, not for hitting home runs, but for pitching when he notched a 0.87 ERA while pitching 29 and 2/3rds scoreless innings. This record for shutout innings would stand for 43 years. In 1919, Ruth hit 29 home runs, the most ever by any player at the time. Unfortunately, the Red Sox finished in sixth place that season. For a club accustomed to tremendous success, this was a disaster.

Frazee responded by selling players, Ruth included, that started a rebuilding period in Boston. The strategy did not work and Boston finished in last place nine out of the next eighteen seasons. They wouldn't win another pennant until 1948.

When Ruth arrived in New York, the Yankees had never won the American League pennant, let alone been to a World Series. They won their first pennant in 1921, and then won their first World Series in 1923. In 1920, the Babe hit 54 home runs, a mind-boggling number given that baseball was just coming out of its Dead Ball Era. Yes, this was a new era, an exciting one with tremendous offense and tremendous flamboyance on and off the diamond.

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Ruth hammered 59 homers the following year (1921), and was showcased in the World Series. Babe Ruth's 1921 season was arguably the best batting year of any player ever. He played in 152 games and hit .378, collecting 204 hits, 44 doubles, 16 triples, 59 home runs, 177 runs scored, 171 RBIs, 144 walks, 119 extra base hits (a record that still stands), an .846 slugging average, and 457 total bases (another standing record).

>From 1923– 1931, Ruth led the league in homers each season, except for one. In 1927, he had his best year for round trippers, knocking 60, a record that would stand for 34 years. Some still say to this day that the 1927 Yankees' "Murderers Row" was the best offensive team to ever play the game of baseball.

The sheer numbers for the Yankees in 1927 make their own argument. The Curse of the Bambino may have been a nightmare for Boston Red Sox fans, but for the rest of the baseball world, Ruth was the

messiah of a very worried and downtrodden sport. The 1919 White Sox (eight of them) had just thrown the World Series, causing the integrity of the game to be questioned by a disenchanted public.

Ruth lived with great enthusiasm, and he seemed to immediately become a living legend after arriving at the media capital of the world. When he started producing monstrous offensive firepower, baseball was suddenly exciting again, and the fans that had turned away in light of the White Sox gambling scandal started returning to the ballparks. He was "bigger than life," and he was the drum major that marched America into "the Roaring Twenties."

He was a media magnet and hype machine. Some sports reporters surmised that in one season with the Yankees the Sultan of Swat "might" slug more than his single season record of 29 homers. When Ruth destroyed the home run records year after year, Yankee fans were overjoyed. When he continued to raise the expectations of fans everywhere, baseball had been resurrected from the depths of despair and corruption to a bright and shining era of hope and enthusiasm.

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### **The Biggest Rivalries In Sports**

**By Pat Stevens**

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>From college football to Major League Baseball, rivalries between teams have always added excitement to fan experience. Many teams are old rivals, while others have developed a competitive intensity more recently. What teams have been fighting it out for some time? Rivalries are at the center of many fan's lives. Here's a quick look at some classic ones.

College football has some of the most talked about rivalries in all of sports. To begin with, you have the heated battles between the Texas Longhorns and the Oklahoma Sooners. Being in neighboring states, they compete for regional bragging rights and often the same recruits. Over the years, there have been many classic match-ups between the two teams.

One of the biggest rivalries in college football history is between Big 10 powerhouses Ohio State and Michigan. These teams, that are usually nationally ranked, are so well matched and competitive that the winner is often determined in the final minutes and sometimes the final seconds of the contest. Consequently, when these two teams play, the game often determines which remains in the National Championship picture and which is out.

The South features the tough competition between the Alabama Crimson Tide and the Auburn Tigers. From the days of Alabama's legendary coach Bear Bryant this has been one of the most talked about match-ups on the gridiron. Both schools are in the same state and are highly competitive with each other year in and year out. There have been many close, tight-knit games over the past century to prove it. The Tennessee Volunteers also have an active rivalry with these two teams but nothing compares to the legendary hard fought battles between the Tigers and the Crimson Tide.

On the west coast, there is the University of Southern California (USC) and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) rivalry. This competition has been dominated recently by the success of Southern California and the strong teams they have produced over the last couple of years. Recently USC has taken to the field with Heisman Trophy winners Matt Leinhardt and Reggie Bush, giving the Trojans the edge. This next year we may see a shift in power with UCLA coming to the forefront.

The National Basketball Association has had the classic battles of the Lakers and the Celtics. For decades these two teams fought back and forth to determine who would take home the NBA crown. There were the great match-ups in the 60's and 70's of Wilt Chamberlain and Bill Russell, which are legendary in the history of the NBA.

The 80's hosted memorable post-season contests between the Lakers' Magic Johnson and the Celtics' Larry Bird. Their respective teams, with Bird running the court and dishing off to Robert Parrish for a slam dunk or Kareem Abdul-Jabbar working the ball inside only to pass back to Johnson for three, produced some of the greatest moments in NBA history and will be talked about for decades to come.

The meetings between the Chicago Bulls and New York Knicks produced another fine rivalry. Michael Jordan with his extreme athletic ability was the catalyst for tough contests in which the Knicks sometimes surprised the team from the Windy City; although the majority of the time Jordan and company were on the plus side in these contests.

Every season a tandem of college basketball teams always stand out as among two of the best in the

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nation. In North Carolina both on and off the court, one college basketball rivalry dominates the region. The University of North Carolina and Duke, both members of the highly competitive Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), are located only 8 miles apart. Both schools possess myriads of faithful fans that have traveled Tobacco Road year after year to see their teams fight for victory.

Since 1990, the two clubs have a combined for a total of eleven Final Four appearances. Those who follow the ACC certainly recognize the high profile contests that have defined their rivalry. The Duke Blue Devils and North Carolina Tar Heels are synonymous with big name games, some of which they have won and others they've lost.

Off the court, these two teams also battle it out by attempting to recruit some of the most talented players in the nation. The Tar Heels and Blue Devils often court the same players, with coaching staffs jousting with each other for the finest players available. NCAA National Championships are the hallmark of both these schools. If you enjoy excitement and hardcore college basketball at its best, Duke and UNC are your ticket.

In Major League Baseball, there is perhaps the greatest rivalry of all sports. The New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox have battled each other on the diamond since the early twentieth century. The rivalry became heated in 1920 when the Red Sox sold the game's greatest player, Babe Ruth, to the New York Yankees. From that point on, the Yankees dominated the rest of Major League Baseball, going on to win 26 World Series; while Boston, after Ruth departed, was unable to capture a single crown.

Some people began to call Boston's championship drought the "curse of the Bambino." The trade of Babe Ruth, who was also known as the "Bambino," was supposedly the reason why Boston couldn't win a championship. But that all changed in 2004 when the Boston Red Sox were able to come back from three games down in the American League Championship Series and defeat the New York Yankees, and then go on to sweep the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series.

This was what Red Sox fans had been waiting for, and now they're hopeful that they will never have to hear about "the curse" again. This has been one heck of a rivalry over the years and odds are that it will continue to be one of the best in sports.

When there's an intense rivalry between two teams it's always magnified by fan enthusiasm. The fans are what make two teams want to compete harder against each other, but it takes exciting, hard-fought games to get the fans interested. Most great rivalries are not built on one or two good contests, but over decades of excellent games.

There is no set number of games that teams must play in order to generate a rivalry. The fans and players together are the ones who decide what makes an ongoing, classic rivalry. But one thing is for certain, there is nothing better than watching two, evenly matched rivals battle it out until only one is left standing.

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