The Life That Ruth Built

A BIOGRAPHY

by Marshall Smelser



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of 1919, and the leading slugger of all years up to and including 1919 by exerting his will power or cramming himself with facts.

Heroes like that man of muscle. . . . Without purpose, apparently, . . . [he achieves] that which most men, even those of exceptional intellect, could never attain if they followed every rule laid down in the book.

-Bozeman Bulger

Babe Ruth had five physical qualities which must be inherited: speed, endurance, strength, accuracy, and coordination. The least flashy and the most necessary was coordination. If you needed someone to thread a needle by dim light in a moving automobile, Babe Ruth would be your man.

Ruth played the ukulele and occasionally went ballroom dancing. It follows from what we know of the close alliance between his senses, nerves, and muscles that he should have been very good on the ukulele and at dancing. He wasn't. Obviously he wasn't really

Babe Ruth did not divide his life into parts but lived it whole. Baseball, food, drink, sleep were all of a piece. Not for him a winter job to prepare for retirement from baseball. He behaved as if there was no life after baseball, no life apart from it. A home run and a prime sirloin were equally enjoyable, and in something of the same

Ruth resembled Charles Dickens's Major Bagshot who, "like some other noble animals, exhibited himself to great advantage at feeding-time." His digestive equipment was excellent, and his eating habits have been widely discussed. Some of the talk probably springs from envy. A look at remedies for indigestion in drugstores and on television screens hints that a large part of the population abuses its alimentary tubing as much as Ruth did, but is pitiably less able to cope. Cookery was not a fine art to this heavy eater; trash food, candy, hot dogs, the run of ball-park fare was as welcome as the work of New York's finest chefs. True, hot dogs were not main dishes but standard between-meals snacks. To accompany the trash food there was always the same heartburn remedy, sodium bicarbonate. Sometimes he ate it dry, a handful at a time. In the clubhouse he might take a swig of a saturated solution of bicarb and water which he kept in a jug in his locker.

People have expressed (or enjoyed?) shock at Babe Ruth's feeding habits, as though a ballplayer ought to set us an example of a spartan diet. But it is a fable that baseball players should keep rigid training. The season, from March through September, is too





long to allow a man to keep the kind of fine physical edge that a boxer achieves on the eve of a match. Ballplayers can't obey the stern training rules that are part of the mythology of athletics. They need a different regimen. The average major-league player loses from four to eight pounds a game (the pitcher loses even more), which he usually makes up before the next game. The hotter the weather the greater the weight loss, and the more beer and ice cream are consumed. A player needs only to keep his muscles stretched and supple, get enough sleep to stay alert during the game, and avoid taking on so much weight that it slows him down. Because of many reports of Ruth's overeating, it is worth noting that when he joined the Yankees he had no double chin, no paunch.

Ruth consciously helped to create the fable of Babe the Glutton. He often grossly overate when strangers or new friends were with him, in order to keep alive his reputation as a greedy feaster. He seemed to think he owed such a show to the spectators. Sometimes it was a restrained and classic act, like the time he asked a waiter to decorate his steak with a border of lamb chops. Usually it was something gaudier. For Paul Derringer's* diversion Ruth once arranged his own dining-car breakfast as follows: a pint of whiskey mixed with a pint of ginger ale in a pitcher of ice, followed by a porterhouse steak, four fried eggs, fried potatoes, and a pot of coffee. He told Derringer this was his daily breakfast. During an evening about New York (including Coney Island) with Harry Heilmann, Fred Haney, and Joe Dugan,** Ruth refreshed himself in the following style: (1) Dinner: two porterhouse steaks, a double order of head lettuce with Roquefort dressing, a double order of cottage-fried potatoes, a double order of apple pie a la mode. (2) First snack at Coney Island: four hot dogs, four bottles of Coca-Cola. (3) Second snack at Coney Island: the same. (4) Late supper: same as dinner. All of this in five or six hours.

Unhappily, young players sometimes thought they could match Ruth and began to eat their way out of baseball. When Huggins caught on to Ruth's café showmanship he told young players they

would be wise not to run around with him.

Before the prohibition amendment, most players drank beer if they drank anything alcoholic. Beer was Babe Ruth's drink. He

** Harry Edwin Heilmann (1894–1951), outfielder, seventeen seasons, 1914–1932, Tigers, Reds, batting average .342.

Joseph Anthony Dugan (1897—), infielder, fourteen seasons, 1917–1931, Athletics, Red Sox, Yankees, Braves, Tigers. batting average .280.

Paul Derringer (1906-), pitcher, fifteen seasons, 1931-1945, Cardinals, Reds, Cubs. Won 232, lost 212, earned-run average 3.46.

Fred Girard Haney (1898—), infielder, seven seasons, 1922–1929, Tigers, Red Sox, Cubs, Cardinals, batting average .275 (manager ten seasons, 1939–1959).

never cared for bourbon, sometimes drank scotch, and drank beer as often as possible. Three shots of whiskey would leave him blurred and sleepy, but he could hold an awful lot of beer without visible signs.

THE AUTHOR: Did he ever complain about trouble sleeping?

JOE SEWELL: I never heard him complain. PEE WEE WANNINGER: Not in my presence.

THE AUTHOR: Did he usually feel well in the morning?

Del Pratt: About eleven.

SEWELL: Always ready to play ball.

ART JORGENS: Didn't see him in the morning very often.
TRUCK HANNAH: [He felt well] morning, noon, or night.
THE AUTHOR: Did he care whether the weather was hot or cold?

HANK JOHNSON: Never complained.

Bob Shawkey: Liked it hot.

BILL DICKEY:* Liked hot weather.

THE AUTHOR: When he made up his mind was it hard to

change it?

SAM VICK: Nobody tried.

SEWELL: He was very determined.

Babe Ruth's singing voice was better than he thought, and his musical taste was worse than he thought. In spontaneous song he was apt to bring out his favorite but now forgotten ballad, "My Darlin' Lou." From occasional mentions of what he liked in music it is plain he would prefer the fourth "B," Carrie Jacobs Bond, to Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms.

In the age of railroading, baseball players who did not read much were driven to cards. Ruth played vigorously, but not in the manner of a gambler. Excitement was his aim.

In hotels on the road he organized pinochle games in his room, which would run until the team's curfew. His poker playing suffered from his love of action. He would get into pots when he should

Paul Louis Wanninger (1902-Red Sox, Reds, batting average .234.

Arndt Ludwig Jorgens (1905-), catcher, eleven seasons, 1929-1939, Yankees, batting average .238.

James Harrison Hannah (1891-), catcher, three seasons, 1918-1920, Yankees, batting average .235.

Henry Ward Johnson (1906-), pitcher, twelve seasons, 1925-1939, Yankees, Red Sox, Athletics, Reds. Won 63, lost 56, earned-run average 4.75.

William Malcolm Dickey (1907—), catcher, seventeen seasons, 1928–1946, Yankees, batting average .313. Hall of Fame.

RUTH STARTS EAST; HIS DIET DISCLOSED

Glass of Orange Juice, Cereal With Skimmed Milk, Hot Drink and Toast His Breakfast.

HOLLYWOOD, Cal., Feb. 26 (P).—Babe Ruth, home run Rajah of the baseball world, who left tonight for New York, was marked "O. K." by his trainer, Artie McGovern, New York gymnasium master, here today.

"Ruth is in perfect physical condition." McGovern said. "He has ten good years of baseball in his system if he takes care of himself."

Here is what did it under McGov-

ern's watchful eye:

Early rising and early retiring; five minutes abdominal exercises on the flat of his back in bed each morning; plenty of work, motion picture and otherwise, to keep the Babe busy, and the following diet: A glass or two of temperate water on rising; breakfast, one glass of orange juice, a bulk cereal with skimmed milk, a hot drink and one slice of dry toast; between breakfast and lunch two glasses of water; lunch, a plate of thin soup, one slice of dark bread toasted, a fresh fruit salad or a vegetable plate; between lunch and dinner two glasses of water; dinner, half a grapefruit, boiled lean meat, chicken or fish, two bulk vegetables, stewed, unsweetened fruit or a gelatin dessert and a hot drink.

Ruth completed his picture work last night at a Burbank studio, where a dance was held in his honor when the last foot of film was reeled off.

By The Associated Press Ruth's Prodigious Appetite Amazes Cook; One Menu Included Turkey That Star Shot

New York Times (1923-Current file); Dec 7, 1932

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009)

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Ruth's Prodigious Appetite Amazes Cook; One Menu Included Turkey That Star Shot

By The Associated Press.

NEW BERN, N. C., Dec. 6.—Babe Ruth, who carries a heavy wallop on the baseball diamond, has come to this section of North Carolina to hunt, carrying a heavy appetite.

Take the word of Amos Davis of Morehead City, cook at the camp, for the appetite of the home-run king, who is bagging almost as much game as he does circuit clouts during the baseball season.

ing the basebal! season.
Ruth arrived at Camp Bryan, near and immediately here, Saturday and with several started out, in company with several friends, in search of game. Up at 7 A. M., he went deer hunting, but came back in several hours, changed tree climber—it that failed to produce results so he

hunting clothes and came back with a quota of doves and two turkeys.

Davis says Ruth is always ready for a meal and has "about the biggest appetite" of any man he ever cooked for. Take Sunday, for instance, Davis said. The menu constance, Davis said. The menu consisted of roast turkey that Ruth had shot, roast ham, boiled ham, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, collards, cornbread, toast, coffee, cake and pie.

"Mr. Ruth will be hungry for dinner," Davis said as he prepared the meal. "He didn't eat much breakfast—only two eggs, when he usually eats five or six—and two or three links of sausage and I don't know how much bacon and about a loaf of bread made up into toast."

Ruth, Davis said, is an inveterate

Ruth, Davis said, is an inveterate tree climber—it's one of his favorite outdoor sports.

6,000 Calories a Day, No Hot Dogs, Keep Ruth Fit as Training Begins

Yankee Ace, Now a Dietitian on His Own Account, Gets Along on Two Meals, Skipping Luncheon—His Weight Is 229, the Lowest He Has Enjoyed in Recent Winters.

The gastronomical feat of Babe Ruth in devouring more than a dozen "hot dogs" at one session is a thing of the past. The Babe established himself on a two-meal-aday schedule as he started in his Winter training routine yesterday at Artie McGovern's gymnasium.

The Yankee star reported to Mc-Govern at the 1-west weight he has ever carried at this time of the year, 229 pounds, in recent years, and his nervous system was equally good—entirely relaxed and at ease. Proper diet and home cooking are the contributing causes, as Ruth adheres rigidly to a regimen that McGovern and Mrs. Ruth have planned for him.

No longer does the Babe eat whenever the spirit moves him. He has breakfast and dinner, but never luncheon or supper. Although he starts the day by partaking of the juice of six oranges, the Babe confines himself to 6,000 calories a day.

Gets Nine Hours' Sleep.

He sleeps at least nine hours and even steals an hour's nap on occasions when he is on the rubbing table. If the masseurs note that the Babe feels inclined to stay on the table, they cover him over with a huge towel and let him rest.

Ruth loses five or six pounds during each workout. Most of this is due to perspiring. Ruth promptly drinks the major part of it back, since he consumes close to a gallon of water each day. But some surplus weight is lost in each drill, and

that generally stays off.

McGovern starts the star each day with setting-up exercises, sends him between five and ten miles a day on the bicycle machine and then either has him box about eight rounds or play a modified form of squash handball. This latter game not only is good for general conditioning but also tunes up the Babe's batting eye.

Although outweighed by nearly 100 pounds, McGovern is usually Ruth's sparring mate. Yesterday, however, Ruth stepped a few rounds with John F. Gilchrist, former transit head and a boxer of note in his younger days.

Ruth reported yesterday a bit earlier than heretofore. Usually he waits until after the holiday season. The Babe intends to work out at McGovern's for two months, since he will leave for the Yankees' Southern camp later than the rest of the team.

One type of exercise that Ruth likes, but which is denied him, is walking. When he plays golf, the Babe is known to have played fifty-four holes in a day. He rarely shoots less than thirty-six. But walking through the streets of New York is an absolute impossibility for so famous a character. He is fairly overwhelmed by eager admirers.

Diet Not Absolutely Set.

The Ruthian diet is not absolutely set day by day. Calories are counted faithfully and Ruth can go over his allotment for breakfast but he must curtail his calory consumption at dinner. This also works in reverse. Sometimes the Babe cuts down on breakfast and steps up his dinner menu.

A typical day's menu follows:

BREAKFAST,

Juice of six oranges. Cereal (hot or cold). Bacon and Eggs. Toast, Coffee.

DINNER.

Clear Soup.
Broiled Lean Meat or Fowl.
Three Vegetables.
Salad.

Fruit Cocktail or Fruit Jelly.

No greasy foods are permitted and the Babe can eat pretty much as he pleases, provided he keeps within the calory limitations. Ruth has become a dietitian on his own account and has no trouble in restraining his appetite.

RUTH'S MEASUREMENTS.

Jan.17,'25. Jan.6,'32. Dec.23,'32.			
Weight	256	23534	229
Neck	43	15%	16 41
Chest. expanded.	45%	48	47
Waist	49%	38	39
Hips Thigh		40 22	$\frac{91}{22}$
Calf	1616	14%	15
Bicep Forearm	$\frac{131/2}{12}$	13%	13%
Toregram detabase	4		*** *