

A Legend Never Goes Out of Style

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Babe Ruth has managed to refashion the sport marketing industry like he changed the sport of baseball. The “Sultan of Swat” completely changed the way society viewed baseball. According to *USA Today Sports*, May 30, 1985, “Babe Ruth fit the mood of the times, and with his influence, the game changed more in four years (1917-21) than it did in the ensuing four decades.” In the book, *The Babe: A Life in Pictures*, it explains that the Babe used a 52-ounce baseball bat to hit when the league norm was only 34 ounces. Along with this heavier bat, Ruth introduced the long ball and the big in-ning with his smooth stride into the pitch and with his swinging from the heels. These minor modifications were just the beginning of changes. The book also recalled that Babe Ruth was the first player to hit a home run in an All-Star game.

The *Complete Baseball Encyclopedia* stated that the Babe was one of the first players to play more than one position, and with definite skill. He was a distinguished outfielder, pitcher, and first baseman. According to the encyclopedia, Ruth won 94 games and had an earned run average of 2.28 in his pitching game, and as a slugger Ruth’s average of one home run every 11.76 times at bat and .690 slugging percentage are the best in baseball history. Babe Ruth has recaptured the advertising industry’s way of marketing a product or bringing excitement to a new promotion. Babe Ruth represents power, tradition, responsibility, and motivation. Ad campaigns utilize the legend to promote an All-American hero. Numerous corporations have prospered from this Supersalesman. The “Sultan of Swat” is hitting home runs for companies like IBM, Sears, and Coca-Cola.

The Babe is incorporated in advertisements to give society the reflection of an ideal athlete, one that is considerate, energetic, and warm. Companies desire an esteemed role model, untouched by media influence, for representing not only their services and products but their company name.

United Valley Bank in Pennsylvania used Babe Ruth to link an older generation to their special checking options for people over the age of 55, because their target market lived in the age of Ruth. They can directly relate to his likeness. Foote, Cone, & Belding created an ad using Babe Ruth for Zenith power supplies. "We used Babe Ruth because he conveys a unique brand of nostalgic power," said Susan Schroeder, VP-management director at the agency. "We wanted to announce that Zenith was in the power supply business, and Ruth was a known figure and someone didn't have to identify." IBM used Ruth to promote the performance and dependability of their computers and corporation. Babe Ruth possesses an inspirational tradition of genuine power and motivation. Many firms, such as Catalyst Resources Inc. out of New York City, have used the Babe Ruth's image, outside of advertisements, to stimulate their employees the way the Babe aroused the crowd. That unique power conveys to a customer, a specific market, or an employee the morals a corporation wants to portray.

Ruth's timeless spirit is bigger than that of any other sports figure. Advertisers notice this unique essence in Babe Ruth through their marketing success stories. The Bradford Exchange is a perfect illustration. The Exchange states that they have become the most prosperous corporation to use the Ruth likeness. The commemorative porcelain plate of Babe Ruth's "Called Shot" has been confirmed by the company to be their wisest investment yet. The Bradford Exchange has sixteen Hall of Fame commemorative baseball plates on the market ranging from Babe Ruth to Ty Cobb and Lou Gehrig to Harmon Killebrew. According to the Bradford Exchange's monthly sales, out of these sixteen plates, Babe Ruth is responsible for 48.74% of sales with Lou Gehrig in second at 18.88% and Ty Cobb at 8.55% following far behind the "Sultan of Swat." The deceased baseball player has proven to be the Exchange's best sport legend.

Ruth typifies the romantic image of today's fans from a period of time that was innocent, when players played for the game. People yearn for this fresh compassion that heroes like Babe Ruth depicted in America's pastime. Babe Ruth is a symbol of what is missing in today's athletic superstars. Ruth took time out for children and signing autographs for every devoted fan. According to an interview with President Nixon about Babe Ruth, "he said he's never turned down an autograph, and at that very luncheon he never ate a bit, but signed autographs the entire time." According to the biography *The Babe: The Legend Comes to Life*, stopping at hospitals

and orphanages to meet with unfortunate or ill children after games or on road trips was a regular routine for the Babe. Ruth felt that the spirit and game of baseball began with young people. In Yankee Stadium on a national Babe Ruth Day, held April 27, 1947, Babe Ruth said that baseball was a sport that kids could grow up with in good or bad times. Youngsters are the foundation of America's great pastime. Today, players go on strike over money and benefits leaving their fans, of all ages, disillusioned. Babe Ruth was instinctively wrapped up in the game's mythology. He was able to maintain this intuitive, uninhibited force throughout the passing decades. Current players deplete this excitement that the Babe's era naturally incorporated into baseball, because the game has become too business oriented.

The marketing enterprise marvels at the incredible promotional appeal of the greatest player of all time, George Herman "Babe" Ruth. From the 1910s to 1995, Babe Ruth has gone from playing baseball to selling computers and kids apparel. The acclaimed Babe has a distinct image that many companies want to involve in their product promotions.

The 100th Anniversary logo and the brand new energetic line of characters in children's apparel, *Lil' Famers*, introduced by Curtis Management Group, has the Babe transported from the Great Depression to the twentieth century in vogue. In advertising, Babe Ruth is a synonym for the game of baseball. The 100th Anniversary Babe Ruth logo is the first of its kind to be introduced in the sport marketing industry. The logo was designed to offer a universal identity on products and packaging for the 100th anniversary celebration. Advertisers, sport critics, and fans all notice the great accomplishments Babe Ruth has made outside of hitting home runs. This recognition distinguishes Ruth from other players of yesterday and today.

Many sport advertisers convey that Babe Ruth's contagious grin, his legend, and position and batting records keep up with the trends of every passing generation. The children's apparel line, *Lil' Famers*, is the first ever licensing program that will bring the legends of yesterday to the young people of today. The character *Lil' Babe* lets a younger generation learn about the leaders in the glory days of baseball when the game was played with an authentic notion of why they were out there on the field to entertain. The kids can be a part of their own ambitions to become the next Babe Ruth through this distinctive clothing line. Children can imagine what it was like to watch Babe Ruth play America's great pastime, baseball. It gives children the chance to accomplish the impossible.

Commercialization of Babe Ruth extends through computers and plates to his everlasting influence on the game of baseball. The "Sultan of Swat" has enthused advertisers with his ceaseless marketing uses. Babe Ruth will eternally be deemed as the lighthearted hero that accomplished the impossible on an off the field. Ruth has left his legend for the world to cherish. This proves that legends, especially Babe Ruth, never go out of style.