

Who was Lou Gehrig?



Lou Gehrig was a famous baseball player who played for the New York Yankees in the late 1920s through 1939. Lou Gehrig died from ALS in 1941. He wore the number 4 and was nicknamed the "Iron Horse" due to the record setting number of consecutive games he played during his career. The ALS Awareness Ribbon is patterned after the blue pinstripe design of the New York Yankees uniform worn by Lou Gehrig.

Lou "Iron Horse" Gehrig was the Yankees first baseman during the late 20's through 1939. He had over 200 hits in eight seasons and had a career average of .340. His most noted accomplishment was his playing streak, which stretched to 2,130 consecutive games, a Major League record which stood for 56 years. Lou Gehrig set an American League record with 184 runs batted in 1931. He holds the record for most career grand slams (23) and won a Triple Crown in 1934. He led the American League in home runs three times, led in RBI five times, and won the League MVP in 1936 when he hit 49 home runs, scored 167 runs, and batted .354.

Lou Gehrig was not only a superb ball player; he was also an incredible human being. Gehrig was modest, never flashy, and as a result he did not receive the attention that was bestowed on his colorful teammate, Babe Ruth. Gehrig was even tempered and well liked by baseball fans and the press. As Fred Lieb, sportswriter, said: "There was absolutely no reason to dislike him, and nobody did."

On July 4th, 1939 the Yankee organization held "Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day." On this day, Lou Gehrig gave the famous speech quoted at the end of this page. He was also presented with various awards and his number 4 was retired, the first player ever to have his number retired. The following December, he was unanimously elected into the Hall of Fame. The Baseball Writers Association waived the existing rule, which required a player to be retired one year before he could be elected. On June 2nd, 1941, Lou Gehrig died in New York from ALS.

Gehrig's immortal words of thanks on July 4, 1939, Lou Gehrig Appreciation Day at Yankee Stadium.

"Fans, for the past two weeks you have been reading about the bad break I got. Yet today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth. I have been in ballparks for 17 years and have never received anything but kindness and encouragement from you fans. Look at these grand men. Which of you wouldn't consider it the highlight of his career just to associate with them for even one day? Sure I'm lucky. Who wouldn't consider it an honor to have known Jacob Ruppert? Also, the builder of baseball's greatest empire, Ed Barrow? To have spent six years with that wonderful little fellow, Miller Huggins? Then to have spent the next nine years with the best manager in baseball today, Joe McCarthy? Sure I'm lucky. When the New York Giants, a team you would give your right arm to beat, and vice versa, sends you a gift - that's something. When everybody down to the groundskeepers and those boys in white coats remember you with trophies - that's something. When you have a wonderful mother-in-law who takes sides with you in squabbles with her own daughter - that is something. When you have a father and a mother who work all their lives so you can have an education and build your body - it is a blessing. When you have a wife who has been a tower of strength and shown more courage than you dreamed existed - that is the finest I know. So I close in saying that I may have had a tough break, but I have an awful lot to live for." --Lou Gehrig