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Winger: Book on Cobb and Ruth a good read

By [Don Winger](#)
08/13/2007

Tyrus Raymond Cobb. George Herman (Babe) Ruth. [Email to a friend](#) [Post a Comment](#) [Printer-friendly](#)

Those were two of the greatest players in the history of Major League Baseball. Cobb, who spent most of his career with the Detroit Tigers, and Ruth, who started his career with the Boston Red Sox before joining the New York Yankees, were fierce rivals on the field.

Cobb was into his 10th season with the Tigers when Ruth made his debut with the Red Sox in 1914.

Their rivalry is well-documented in a new book entitled "Ty and The Babe" written by Tom Stanton, a former Knight-Wallace Fellow and a former professor of journalism at the University of Detroit Mercy.

The book is an easy read with short chapters that chronicle their on-field rivalry and explores their friendship off the field following the conclusion of their playing days.

While Stanton's book details their animosity when opposing each other more than 200 times on the field, he also debunks many of the myths surrounding both men.

Away from the field Cobb, nicknamed the Georgia Peach, because of his having grown up in Georgia, was a learned individual. He also invested wisely and became a very astute businessman.

Ruth, a Baltimore native, was known to be more of a playboy. Stanton asserts that his behavior likely was born from the experiences of the Babe's own youth when he grew up at St. Mary's Industrial School, an institution of the Roman Catholic Church run by the Xaverian Brothers. It was a strict environment that permitted the boys few pleasures.

Yet, during and after his playing days, Ruth showed much compassion towards youth. He often visited children in hospitals in an effort to bring some cheer into their dreary lives.

The book also discusses the longtime debate about which man's style had the greatest impact on the game -- Cobb's flashy, baserunning style, or Ruth's mighty home run blasts that eventually led to a single-season record of 60 in 1927.

Both men were among the inaugural class elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1939. Cobb holds the distinction of being the first player enshrined -- a fact of which he was very proud.

To me, one of the most interesting parts of the book tells about their passion for playing golf and the three matches they played for youthful charities during the summer of 1941. The exhibitions were staged in Boston, New York and Detroit and showed that their competitive juices had not diminished since their retirement from baseball.

If you are like me, you will find this book hard to put down once you begin reading this story about two of baseball's greatest. I recommend it for the shelf of any fan.

Don Winger is the retired executive sports editor of the Daily News. e-mail him at dwinger103@aol.com or telephone him at 631-0347.

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