

Hank Greenberg Chases Babe Ruth

by

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Detroit's Hank Greenberg mounted the first serious assault on Babe Ruth's single season home run mark of 60 set in 1927 during the 1938 season.

Greenberg hit two tremendous blasts against the St. Louis Browns on September 27th to bring his season total to 58 homers. This was the eleventh time in the 1938 season that Greenberg had hit two homers in a single game. His first of the day came off Browns' pitcher Bill Cox in the first inning, a massive 440-foot line drive that Greenberg legged out for an inside the park home run. His second came in his next at-bat in the third inning. He now had five games remaining in the season in which to hit three home runs and break Ruth's record.

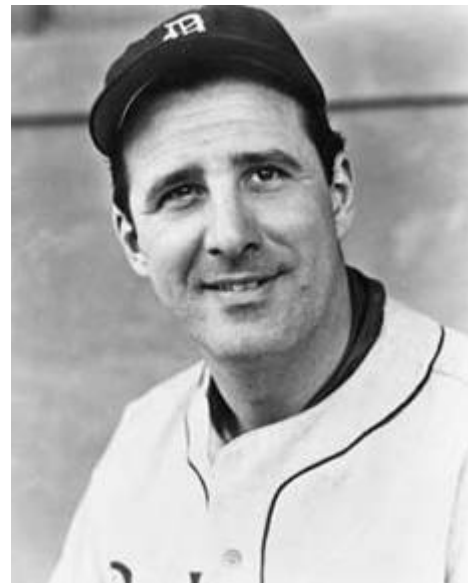
Greenberg was ahead of Ruth's 1927 pace. Ruth hit his 57th homer in game 151 and his 58th in game 152 of the season. Greenberg's 57th and 58th occurred in game 149 of the season.

The Tigers once again faced the St. Louis Browns on September 28th, but despite a potent offense that tallied 12 runs against the hapless Browns, Greenberg went hitless, walking twice, striking out twice, and one pop fly out for the day. Four games remaining – two homers to tie the record, three to set a new record.

September 29th found the Tigers facing the Browns and Buck Newsom. Greenberg hit a single to left, two pop fly outs and a fly out to center. His hopes to tie or break Ruth's record now came down to a three game series in Cleveland.

Denny Galehouse took the mound for the Indians on Saturday, October 1st, and held the Tigers to five hits, pitching his finest outing of the season. Greenberg went hitless and the pressure was mounting with only two games remaining in the season.

October 2nd found young Bob Feller on the bump for the Indians in the first game of the season finale double header. He threw an incredible game, fanning 18 Tigers to break his own record set





in 1936 of 17 strikeouts in a single game. Greenberg accounted for only one of the Tigers' seven hits, but it was not a four-bagger. Despite Feller's heroics, the Tigers took the first game 4 to 1.

Game two of the doubleheader saw Greenberg go 3-for-3 with three singles, scoring three runs, and leading his Tigers to a 10 to 8 victory, but his quest to break Babe Ruth's single season home run record was over. Throughout the final stretch, despite the media hype and the pressure from the fans, Greenberg epitomized grace under pressure as he did throughout his career.

Greenberg finished the 1938 season leading the league in home runs (58), runs (144), and walks (119). He finished third in MVP voting behind Boston's Jimmie Foxx and the Yankees' Bill Dickey.

Greenberg ended his 13-year career in 1947 with a total of 331 home runs and was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1956.