MICKEY MANTLE

His Final Inning

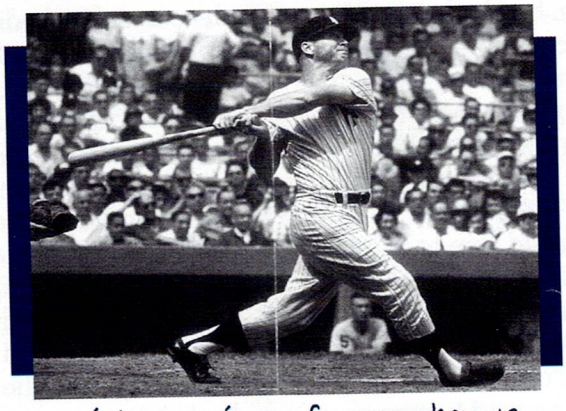


New York Yankees, 1951–1968

He was one of the most popular athletic heroes in American history. Long after he'd hung up his famous pinstriped uniform, grown men would stammer and stutter in his presence and faithful fans would pay unbelievable prices for his memorabilia. His achievements were many, but they cannot explain his enduring popularity. His millions of admirers felt a deep emotional attachment to this man who moved with such fluid grace and raw power. They loved Mickey Mantle.

His statistics are staggering—536 home runs, 1,509 RBIs, .298 career batting average, seven world championships, and three MVP awards—and they are all the more impressive when we consider how the Hall of Famer courageously battled chronic, painful injuries during his 18 years with the New York Yankees. In addition, he won the Triple Crown in 1956—a .353 batting average, 52 HRs, and 130 RBIs. In 1961, he hammered 54 homers, just six shy of Babe Ruth's record.

But these numbers dim when compared to what happened in the harsh summer of 1995 during Mickey's desperate "final inning."



Mickey swings for number 49

Faced with an aggressive cancer, he displayed incredible courage and humility—even humor—as he battled for his life. And when he chose to drag his frail body in front of a mass of microphones to address the public, there was not a trace of self-pity in his words—only heartfelt pleas to avoid the mistakes he had made. "Don't be like me," he humbly declared, "I'm no role model!" But despite his flaws, Mantle remained a hero to his multitude of fans, and due to his honesty gained many new ones.

At age 19 he left the lead mines of Oklahoma for the bright lights of New York City. Unfortunately, those lights cast a shadow over his life. After Mickey's first season, his father, Mutt Mantle, died of Hodgkins disease at 40. His grandfather and two of his uncles also died from the same disease before their 40th birthdays. As a result, a growing fear of dying young haunted the budding superstar. He would talk long into the night with his close teammates, confiding to them this nagging fear.

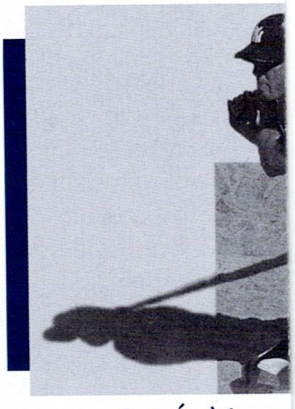
Convinced an early funeral was his inevitable fate, though often joking about it, he played hard and partied even harder.

For him there was no tomorrow. Tragically, this attitude led to a 40-year battle with alcohol that caused his body to grow old before its time and clouded his mind. Many criticized his self-destructive lifestyle, saying it sabotaged the greatest combination of power and speed the game had ever seen. In the autumn of his life, Mantle came to agree with those critics, admitting that his drug of choice—alcohol—kept him from reaching his full potential as a player and as a person. He had learned the hard lesson that a man reaps what he sows.

Finally in 1994, at the urging of his family and friends, Mickey got help for his addiction. After checking himself into the Betty Ford Center, he was able to win his long battle with the bottle. But he knew something was still missing in his life. He just wasn't sure what it was.

In June of '95, doctors discovered that cancer had destroyed Mantle's liver. He was fortunate to receive a transplant, and for a while it seemed as if the greatest switch hitter of all time would live to fight another day. Then doctors found that cancer remained in his body, and he began chemotherapy. Mickey knew he was facing death. In July he called his old friend and teammate, former Yankee second baseman Bobby Richardson—a committed Christian. Mickey asked him to pray for him over the phone. A few weeks later when doctors had discovered that the cancer had aggressively spread, Mickey's family asked Bobby if he would come visit him.

After entering the hospital room, Richardson went over to Mantle's bed and took his hand. Locking his eyes on him, Bobby said, "Mickey, I love you, and I want you to spend eternity in heaven with me." Mantle smiled and said, "Bobby, I've been wanting to tell you that I have trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior." Faced with the crushing weight of his sin against a holy God and its horrible consequence—eternal separation from God—Mickey had asked for and received the forgiveness he so desperately needed. For Richardson, that news of his conversion felt like cool rain after a summer drought, and brought tears to his eyes. For years, he had talked to Mickey about knowing Jesus, but there was no interest. Now, in the final inning of his life, the Mick had won his greatest

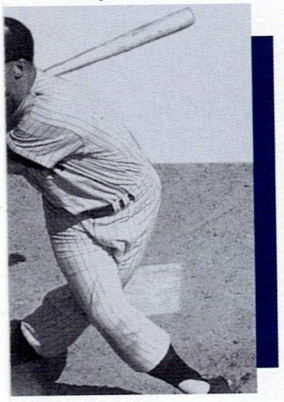


A mighty n

victory—more glorious than any of his tape-measure home runs.

When asked later how he knew he would spend eternity with God in heaven, Mickey, after a moment of thought, quoted John 3:16 from the Bible: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

At Mickey's funeral, Bobby Richardson told 2,000 mourners and a national TV audience that there are only two groups of people: those who say "yes" to Christ and those who say "no." He added that, since none of us knows when he will face his own final inning, saying "maybe" is really saying "no." The Bible confirms this when it says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them" (John 3:36).



iss in 1958

So, what about you, my friend? Remember, God's book, the Bible, says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). But the good news is that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In addition, "It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18,19).

Don't delay! Life is short and eternity is quickly approaching. There is no second chance. If you have never trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, do it now! Why not pray right now, saying something like this:

"Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner—full of pride and selfishness—and I need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died in my place to pay the penalty for my sins and that You rose from the dead. I now trust in You alone as my Savior and receive Your gift of eternal life."

Friend, I urge you to consider that "now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Ed Cheek

STILL SETTING BASEBALL RECORDS!



On August 28, 2022, Mickey's iconic TOPPS 1952 rookie card sold for $12.6 million—the MOST EVER PAID for ANY sports memorabilia!

Tony I didn't answer some 10 yrs ago. I went through Brain Surgery at Mayo Clinic & I didn't answer my mail for a couple months or so. Sorry about that but glad to give my answer Today. I know you received so many answers but there is only 63 just one in the Bible

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