

Maris, Roger (1934-1985) Encyclopedia Article

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Roger Maris holds a significant place in sporting history as the baseball player who broke Babe Ruth's single-season home run record, and held that record from 1961 until 1998. He was voted the American League's Most Valuable Player in 1960 and 1961, while playing for the New York Yankees. Maris's pursuit of Babe Ruth's record was the focus of national media attention in 1961—and the attention clearly made him unhappy. An intensely private person, the glare of the media spotlight caused him to lose his hair and gave him insomnia, but he broke Ruth's record by hitting his 61st homer in the last game of the season.

Many people were not happy with Maris's achievement, and commissioner Ford Frick claimed the record was questionable because Maris hit 61 homers in 162 games, while Ruth had hit 60 in 154 games. This controversy became known as the "asterisk" after Maris's name in the official record listings, although no real asterisk existed. Maris's record was topped by Mark McGwire, who hit 70 home runs in 1998.

Further Reading:

Edwards, C. W. *Maris, Missing from the Hall of Fame*. Fargo, North Dakota, Prairie House Publishers, 1993.

Robinson, E. *Roger Maris: Title to Fame*. Fargo, North Dakota, Prairie House Publishers, 1992.