

History of Yankee Stadium (1923-2008)
Memorable Baseball Events at Yankee Stadium
Memorable Non-Baseball Events at Yankee Stadium
Comparison of Fenway Park to Yankee Stadium

Chapter 9

*The interesting facts for **Chapter 9** will be all about “The House that Ruth Built”. Of course, I am talking about Yankee Stadium.*

Yankee Stadium, an American Icon

Yankee Stadium was opened on April 18, 1923. It was built for \$2.5 million and it was America's first three-deck stadium. It took 284 working days to complete the stadium.

On opening day of Yankee Stadium, cheers could be heard throughout the stadium as Babe Ruth hit a three-run home run against the Boston Red Sox to lead the Yankees to a 4-1 win on April 18, 1923. The crowd was announced at 74,200. A very good seat cost \$1.10.

The stadium will close 85 and 1/2 years after opening. The final game, at Yankee Stadium, was played on September 21, 2008. The final home run was hit by Jose Molina. Molina's through the 2008 season had a career total of 19 home runs. So, the first home run was hit by Babe Ruth, having a career total of 714 home runs and the last home run was hit by a defensive catcher with only three home runs in 100 games in 2008.

All 26 World Series titles and 37 of 39 American League pennants won by the Yankees have come in the years they played here. Yankee Stadium had baseball's first electric message board (1959) and first replay screen (1976).

For the years of 1974 and 1975 the stadium was closed for renovation at a cost of approximately \$125 million. During those two years the Yankees played their home games at Shea Stadium, the home of the New York Mets.

Yankee Stadium is an icon because of the events that occurred inside the stadium during its 85 year life. The following is a list of some of the most memorable events in baseball and outside of baseball that occurred there.

Some of the Most Memorable Baseball Events at Yankee Stadium

- **September 30, 1927:** It was on this day that Babe Ruth hit home run number 60. This record would last for 34 years.
- **July 4, 1939:** Lou Gehrig, without preparing a speech, facing both the end of his career and the end of his life stated these memorable words, “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.” Speaking for myself, every time I see the film of this event it give me the chills.
- **April 27, 1947:** Babe Ruth, suffering from throat cancer, bids farewell with a hoarse voice to the fans at Yankee Stadium.
- **October 8, 1956:** After being hit hard in Game 2 of the 1956 World Series, Don Larsen wasn’t even sure he would start Game 5. He not only started that game but pitched the only perfect game in a World Series. Larsen struck out seven Dodgers and only reached three balls on one batter. There were two great defensive plays that preserved the perfect game. What I remember most is Yogi Berra jumping into Larsen’s arms at the end of the game.
- **October 1, 1961:** Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle were both closing in on Babe Ruth’s home run record. The fan-favorite was Mantle, who was beset by injuries, and could only hit 54 home runs that year. Unlike Mantle, who was home-grown, Maris arrived through a trade with Kansas City before the 1960 season. It was the last game of the season against Boston at Yankee Stadium when Maris hit his sixty- first home run against Tracy Stallard. Only 23,000 fans bothered to show up. The Yankees had already clinched the

pennant. I guess the fans in 1961 saw no value in catching the record-setting ball. This was the first year of the new 162 game schedule. Many baseball people felt there should be an asterisk alongside the new record. Baseball executives disagreed.

- **October 14, 1976:** It was game five of the ALCS against Kansas City. The score was tied at 6 in the bottom of the ninth inning. Chris Chambliss connected off Mark Littell and boomed a blast into the right field stands. The Yankee fans, having not seen an AL pennant winner since 1964, stormed onto the field. Chambliss had to run through the fans to get to home plate.
- **October 18, 1977:** Reggie Jackson hit three home runs which helped the Yankees win game six and beat the Dodgers in the World Series. Jackson's performances in World Series gave rise to his nickname of Mr. October.
- **July 24, 1983:** This game has been called the pine-tar game. George Brett lost it when a home run he hit off Goose Gossage was overturned because Billy Martin convinced the umpires that there was too much pine tar on the bat. Brett had to be physically restrained from attacking the umpires.
- **October 9, 1996:** In Game 1 of the ALCS against the Orioles, 12-year old Jeffrey Maier reached out and helped steer a Derek Jeter fly ball into the right field stands.
- **July 19, 1999:** It was Yogi Berra day at Yankee Stadium. Don Larsen was there and threw out the first ball to Yogi. David Cone went out and pitched a perfect game against the Montreal Expos retiring 27 straight batters on 88 pitches.
- **October 16, 2003:** It was game seven against the Boston Red Sox. The Yankees, who trailed throughout the game against Pedro Martinez, tied the score at five with four straight hits off of Martinez. Aaron Boone led off the eleventh inning against knuckleballer Tim Wakefield with a home run into the left field stands. This propelled the Yankees into the 2003 World Series.
- **October 31, 2001:** During Game 4 of the World Series against the Arizona Diamondbacks, the Yankees trailed by a score of 3-1 going into the bottom of the ninth inning. With two outs and one on, Tino Martinez hit a two-run home run to tie the score. As the clock struck midnight, Derek Jeter hit a game-winning home run. This was the first November at-bat in baseball history. Jeter was tagged with the name of Mr. November.

- **July 1, 2004:** It was the top of the 12th inning, with runners on second and third base and two outs, Red Sox outfielder Trot Nixon hit a pop fly toward the seats behind third base. Derek Jeter, running at full speed, dove into the stands and made the catch. When he emerged from the stands, he was bleeding but had the ball for the third out.

Some Memorable Events Outside of Baseball hosted at Yankee Stadium

- **November 10, 1928:** A twice defeated Notre Dame Football team was to meet the undefeated, powerhouse Army team. At halftime, the score was tied at zero. It was at halftime that the legendary Knute Rockne gave his famous speech to the players. He told his players to “win one for the Gipper.” George Gipp was a star football player for Notre Dame. He was Notre Dame’s first All-American. Shortly after his final football game, he died of pneumonia. On his death bed in 1920, he supposedly told Knute Rockne “When the team is up against it and the breaks are beating the boys, tell them to go out and win one for the Gipper.” Notre Dame wound up winning the game 12-6.
- **June 22, 1938:** Joe Lewis defeated Hitler favorite Max Schmeling in their rematch for the heavyweight championship of the world. Joe knocked out Schmeling in 124 seconds. The rest of the story was, in his later years, Joe Lewis had many financial problems. Max Schmeling proved to be a great friend of Joe Lewis by aiding him financially.
- **December 28, 1958:** What many football people believe was the most important professional football game ever played occurred at Yankee Stadium. It was the championship game between the New York Giants and the Baltimore Colts. The Baltimore Colts defeated the New York Giants in overtime.
- **September 28, 1976:** Muhammad Ali defeated Ken Norton in a controversial 15 round decision to defend his heavyweight championship.
- **June 21, 1990:** Yankee stadium was the first international stop of Nelson Mandela after being released from a 27-year prison stint.
- **September 23, 2001:** Twelve days after the September 11th attack by terrorists an interfaith prayer service was held at Yankee Stadium. The choice of Yankee Stadium as the place for the ceremony was agreed upon by all New York leaders. The ceremony was attended by President Clinton, Mayor Giuliani, and many celebrities.

- **April 20, 2008:** Pope Benedict held a service at Yankee Stadium. His service followed appearances at the Stadium by Pope Paul VI in 1965 and Pope John Paul II in 1979.

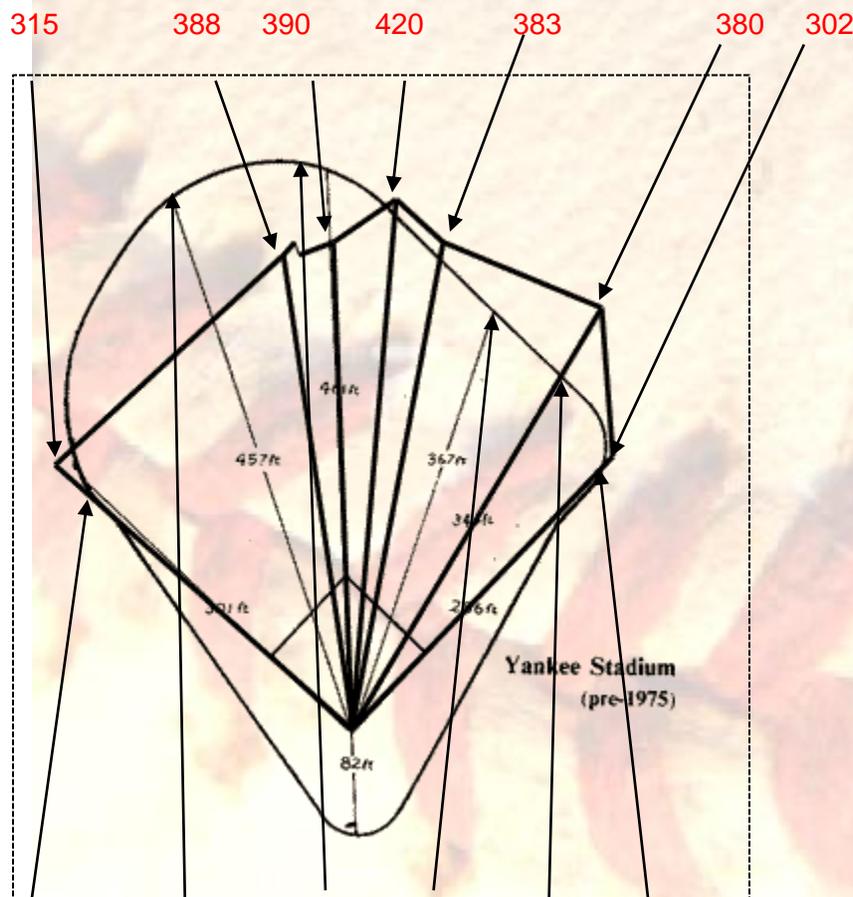
Comparison of Fenway Park to Yankee Stadium (pre 1975)

In the figure below I have inserted Fenway Park, Ted Williams' home ballpark for his entire career, into Yankee Stadium (Pre 1975), Joe DiMaggio's home ballpark for his entire career. Joe DiMaggio was a right handed batter with most of his home run going to left and left center in Yankee Stadium. Ted Williams was a left-handed pull hitter for the Red Sox.

A perfect trade might have been Ted Williams for Joe DiMaggio. If this trade was executed early in their respective careers; what home run records would these two players have set?

Fenway Park (In Bold)

Fenway Park Dimensions



Yankee Stadium Dimensions (pre-1975 not in bold)