

The Last Hero: A Life of Henry Aaron



In the 34 years since his retirement, Henry Aarons reputation has only grown in magnitude: he broke existing records (rbis, total bases, extra-base hits) and set new ones (hitting at least 30 home runs per season 15 times, becoming the first player in history to hammer 500 home runs and 3000 hits). But his influence extends beyond statistics, and at long last here is the first definitive biography of one of baseballs immortal figures. Based on meticulous research and interviews with former teammates, family, two former presidents, and Aaron himself, *The Last Hero* chronicles Aarons childhood in segregated Alabama, his brief stardom in the Negro Leagues, his complicated relationship with celebrity, and his historic rivalry with Willie Mays - all culminating in the defining event of his life: his shattering of Babe Ruths all-time home-run record. Bryant also examines Aarons more complex second act: his quest to become an important voice beyond the ball field when his playing days had ended, his rediscovery by a public disillusioned with todays tainted heroes, and his disappointment that his career home-run record was finally broken by Barry Bonds during the steroid era, baseballs greatest scandal. Bryant reveals how Aaron navigated the upheavals of his time fighting against racism while at the same time benefiting from racial progress, and how he achieved his goal of continuing Jackie Robinsons mission to obtain full equality for African-Americans, both in baseball and society, while he lived uncomfortably in the public spotlight. Eloquently written, detailed and penetrating, this is a revelatory portrait of a complicated, private man who through sports became an enduring American icon.

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