



Disability History and Awareness Month 2023

Lou Gehrig

Henry Louis Gehrig (Lou) was born June 19, 1903, in Manhattan, New York. Lou was the second of four children born to German immigrants. Lou was easily best known as an American professional baseball first baseman in his professional life. Gehrig played 17 seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB) for the New York Yankees from 1923–1939. Gehrig was renowned for his skill as a hitter and durability, earning him his nickname, "the Iron Horse." He is widely regarded as one of the greatest baseball players ever. He was an All-Star seven consecutive times, a Triple Crown winner once, an American League (AL) Most Valuable Player twice, and a member of six World Series champion teams. In 1939, he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.



Later in his career, Gehrig began experiencing worsening mysterious symptoms that significantly affected his ability to perform on the field. After six days of extensive testing at the clinic, doctors confirmed the diagnosis of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease) on June 19, 1939, his birthday. Gehrig's prognosis was grim: rapidly increasing paralysis, difficulty in swallowing and speaking, and a life expectancy of fewer than three years. Following the publication of his prognosis, Gehrig formally retired from the Yankees and received widespread recognition for his record-breaking career.

After he retired from Baseball, Gehrig took a job as the New York City Parole Commissioner; he indicated that he took the job over more financially appealing offers because he wanted to contribute to public service. As his condition worsened, his wife would assist him until he eventually stepped back from the role.

At 10:10 p.m. on June 2, 1941, 17 days before his 38th birthday, Gehrig died in his home. Mayor La Guardia ordered flags in New York to be flown at half-staff, and major-league ballparks nationwide followed suit.

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