



- 1 Throughout history, sport has drawn people together to compete and have fun. Many people play sport in the world today, however there is a rare breed of sportsperson who, every so often, appears on the scene. They have an incredible talent for their chosen game that raises them to the rank of sporting legend. Every country in the world has their own legend. Here are just a few of them.
- 2 An American legend is the famous baseball player, Babe Ruth. Ruth had a troubled childhood and by the age of seven was placed in a reform school. It was here he learnt how to play baseball. In 1914 Ruth signed a contract to play professional baseball. Since he was only 19 and not yet an adult, the team's

owner Jack Dunn had to become Ruth's legal guardian. In his first season Ruth was known as "Dunn's baby". This was eventually shortened to "Babe". He was enormously popular, especially for being a gentleman both on and off the field. Babe dominated the sport with his impressive batting feats — he became baseball's first famous home run slugger. In his 1927 season, Babe hit 60 home runs. This was a record that wasn't eclipsed for another 34 years. Over his career he played in a remarkable total of ten World Series. He also won the All Star award twice and an award for being "America's Most Valuable Player". At the end of his career he had hit a record 714 homers. Babe changed the sport from a pitcher-dominated game, where runs

were scraped out, to a spectacular home run event.

- 3 If you visited Great Britain, however, no one would mention Babe Ruth. In Great Britain many would tell you about their legend, the soccer player, George Best. Many people believe George was the greatest talent to have ever played the game. This is quite a statement given that soccer is the biggest participant sport in the world. George was born in Belfast and was a cheeky street kid growing up. He played for his country 37 times and won two championships with different teams as well as two "Player of the Year" trophies. George's talents were numerous: he had superb balance, a great kick, a fabulous header, marvellous dribbling skills and a deadly goal shot. He also had a great footballer's brain and impressed the audience with his anticipation and ability on the field, delighting them as he 'toyed' with his opponents. The Brazilian soccer player Pele, also amongst the best in the world, was a big fan of Best, calling him his favourite player.

Best's career was a magnificent one, although his problems with alcoholism led to him being sacked by Manchester United and having brief stints in America, Scotland and Australia.

When he died in 2005, aged 59, 100,000 people attended his funeral which was also telecast live on television.

- 4 As for the sports-mad country of Australia, many would consider the cricketer Sir Donald Bradman to be their greatest sporting legend.

Since his debut test match in 1928, Bradman

has been an Australian hero. Most Australians know him affectionately as "The Don". His feat of scoring so many fifties, centuries, double centuries and triple centuries is still unmatched, even though his last game was more than fifty years ago. Over his whole career his Test batting average was 99.94. This is exceptional because it's about twice the average of most great batsmen. Such a large gap between averages makes Bradman's score the best statistical average for any major sport in the world.

- 5 Although sports are hard to compare, Babe Ruth's average wasn't twice as high as other great batters. Nor did George Best score or set up twice as many goals as other great players.

Bradman's brilliance and dominance with the bat was so great that for the 1932-33 series against England, the English team devised a brutal way of playing cricket called "bodyline". Even though Australia lost this series, with the English continually bowling bouncers and often hitting the Australian batsman, the Don still managed a healthy 56 run average over this series of games.

- 6 The Don had a great natural ability for sports and a good eye for ball games. As a boy he practised by hitting a golf ball against a water tank with a cricket stump. This was such a difficult task that Bradman built up an amazing skill after years of practice. He also had fabulous concentration that carried him through many long innings. He could probably have been good at many other sports, but he concentrated on cricket.

- 7 Without a doubt, The Don is the most

spectacular cricketer to ever play the game. His innings were so good that the newspapers continually reported his feats to his adoring audience. Other teams did not know how to get him out and he simply continued to bat.

Besides his great achievements on the field, The Don was a real gentleman who had a genuine love of the game. Well after he finished playing, he continued to involve himself in the

game as a selector and administrator.

8 These three men are only a selection from the amazing talents of sporting history. Each one is loved in their home country, and even respected throughout the world. But the difference in their skills and the uniqueness of their personalities makes it impossible to compare them beyond sharing the title of "legend of sport".



Questions

- 1 Babe Ruth went to a reform school at the age of
 - a five
 - b seven
 - c eight.
- 2 The crowd was delighted when
 - a Best toyed with defenders.
 - b Pele gave Best a compliment.
 - c Best headed the ball.
- 3 After he retired from cricket, Bradman
 - a went on lots of holidays.
 - b became an administrator and a selector.
 - c became a cricket coach for the Australian team.

- 4 Why did Bradman hit a golf ball against a tank stand with a cricket stump?
 - a He enjoyed playing cricket in unusual ways.
 - b He was too poor to afford a proper cricket bat.
 - c It was difficult to do and so improved his batting skills.
- 5 What information in the text tells you that Bradman was a famous sportsman?
 - a Newspapers continually reported on him.
 - b Australians began to shorten his name to Donald.
 - c He scored more runs in an innings than anyone else.
- 6 How do you know the English were worried about Bradman's batting?
 - a They had played against Bradman before.
 - b The newspapers reported that Bradman would beat them.
 - c They invented a new way of bowling to try to get him out.

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 Had complete control over (2)
- 8 'Played with' an opponent (3)
- 9 To be unrivalled (4)
- 10 Created a plan (5)
- 11 Having great admiration for someone (7)

Grammar

The words in **BLUE** appear in the text. Match them by writing the correct synonym shown in **RED**.

E.g. **under** / **below**

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 12 drawn | extremely |
| 13 troubled | extraordinary |
| 14 enormously | gathered |
| 15 remarkable | unsettled |

Back To The Text...

- 16 Another good name for this text would be:
 - a Top of Their Game
 - b Batting Superstars
- 17 Writers often use emotive language to persuade the reader. Which of the following words, from section 5, are emotive?
 - a "... managed a healthy 56 run average ..."
 - b "... devised a brutal way ..."

- 18 In section 6, "He could probably have been good at many other sports ..." is
 - a fact
 - b opinion

Think About This

- 19 Chronologically, what occurred first? Choose **a** or **b**.
 - a Babe commenced his professional baseball career.
 - b The Don commenced his professional cricket career.
- 20 The careers of The Don, Babe and George Best took place in the
 - a 18th Century.
 - b 19th Century.
 - c 20th Century.
- 21 Which two of the three legends were known as real gentlemen?
 - a Babe Ruth and George Best.
 - b Babe Ruth and Don Bradman.
 - c Don Bradman and George Best.
- 22 Using the image on the front of the card as a guide, which two of the three sports are most alike?
 - a cricket and soccer
 - b cricket and baseball
 - c soccer and baseball
- 23 What part of speech is the word *practice* in section 6?
 - a verb
 - b noun
 - c adjective

Challenge Option

Drawing: Draw a female legend of sport.

