

Positively Speaking

By Mark Wilson

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Bunts and Homeruns

Although it's been over seven decades since Babe Ruth played baseball and most of his records have been eclipsed by others, he's still recognized as the greatest slugger who ever lived. The Bambino is truly an American icon. I'll never forget taking my boys to the Smithsonian and admiring their Babe Ruth artifacts. We just stared and said, "Wow!"

Time after time, the Sultan of Swat strode to the plate and hammered one out of the park. He was the first major leaguer to hit 60 homers in one season. His career record of 714 homeruns stood for nearly four decades (without steroids!) and he still remains the all time slugging leader.

Every survey and ranking lists Babe among the "greatest of the greats" – usually at the top of the heap. It's no wonder the old Yankee Stadium is still known as "The House that Ruth Built."

There's another major league record holder worth noting. His name was Eddie "Cocky" Collins, who played as an infielder for the Athletics and White Sox. Collins played in the early 1900's, and several seasons overlapped with Ruth.

Like Babe, Collins was at the top of his game. He led the Athletics to four pennants and three World Series titles. He was selected as the League's Most Valuable Player in 1914 (Babe Ruth's rookie season.) One sportswriter recently called him the greatest second baseman in history.

Cocky Collins set a record that still stands today – almost a century after he retired from baseball. He is the all time major league BUNT leader. 512 bunts! That's over 100 more than the guy in second place, and twice as many as the active bunt leader, Omar Vizquel.

So we have two baseball greats before us – one is famous for homeruns and other (not so famous) for bunting.

At first glance, holding the bunting record seems less than inspiring. Who would want that distinction? Homeruns are much more exiting! The crowd, for instance, doesn't go bananas when a player decides to lay down a sacrifice bunt.

With a deeper look, however, a bunt is a many splendored thing! Sacrificial acts for others are, indeed, noble and praiseworthy. We should all assume this posture as we relate to the people around us. The most valuable players in any team, business, or organization are those who ask "How can I serve you?" (Rather than "How can YOU serve ME?")

Those who selflessly invest their lives behind the scenes to help others advance are the greatest heroes – I think of teachers, medical workers, mothers, cooks, technicians, nurses, custodians, mentors, secretaries and other support staff. The world couldn't exist without these unsung heroes.

This is the Lesson from Cocky Collins: Give yourself away. It doesn't matter who gets the credit, as long as the team is moving forward in the right direction. There is great virtue in standing aside for the advancement of others. "There is no greater love than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

However, we can learn a lesson from Babe Ruth too. Swing for the fence!! The Bambino didn't hold back. He didn't hesitate. He went for it and took the necessary risk. He committed himself FULLY and didn't just play it safe. Sometimes the Babe hit leather and other times he hit air (1330 strikeouts) but all the time, he was swinging the bat!

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Bottom Line?

Have a heart like Cockey Collins with a faith like Babe Ruth.
When it comes to serving others -- make the sacrificial bunt.
When it comes to taking bold steps of faith -- swing for the fence!

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