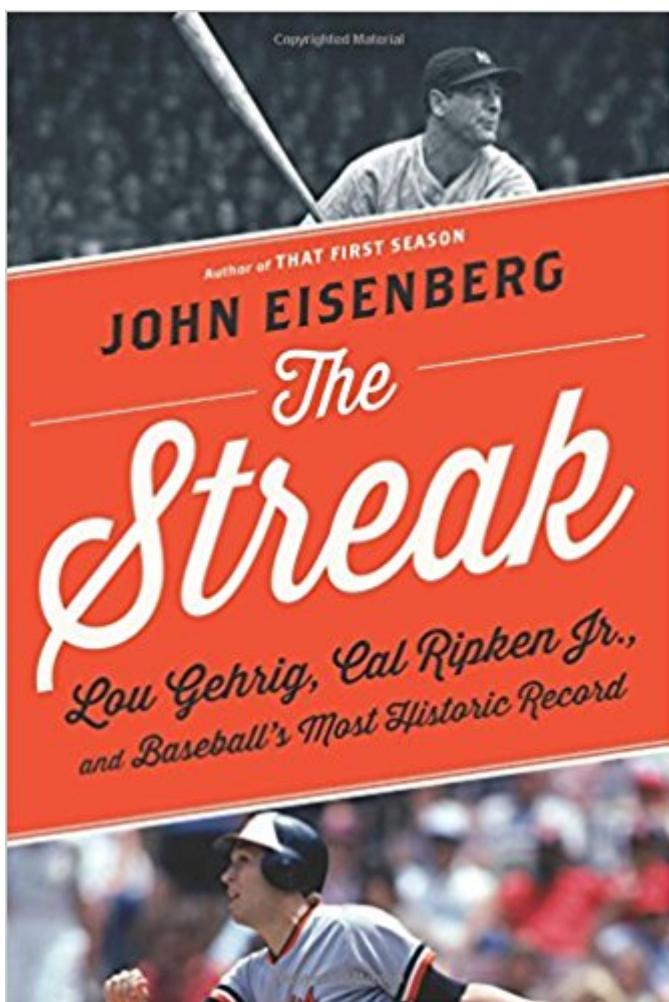


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The Streak: Lou Gehrig, Cal Ripken Jr., And Baseball's Most Historic Record



Synopsis

The fascinating story of baseball's legendary "Ironmen," two players from different eras who each achieved the coveted and sometimes confounding record of most consecutive games played. When Cal Ripken Jr. began his career with the Baltimore Orioles at age twenty-one, he had no idea he would someday beat the historic record of playing 2,130 games in a row, a record set forty-two years before by the fabled "Iron Horse" of the New York Yankees, Lou Gehrig. Ripken went on to surpass that record by 502 games, and the baseball world was floored. Few feats in sports history have generated more acclaim. But the record spawns an array of questions. When did someone first think it was a good idea to play in so many games without taking a day off? Who owned the record before Gehrig? Whose streak—Gehrig's or Ripken's—was the more difficult achievement? Through probing research, meticulous analysis, and colorful parallel storytelling, *The Streak* delves into this impressive but controversial milestone, unraveling Gehrig's at-times unwitting pursuit of that goal (Babe Ruth used to think Gehrig crazy for wanting to play every game), and Ripken's fierce determination to stay in the lineup and continue to contribute whatever he could even as his skills diminished with age. The question looms: How do these streaks compare? There were so many factors: the length of seasons, the number of teams in the major leagues, the inclusion of nonwhite players, travel, technology, medical advances, and even media are all part of the equation. This is a book that captures the deeply American appreciation—as seen in the sport itself—for a workaday mentality and that desire to be there for the game every time it called.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[Eisenberg] builds his story with shrewd analysis and good reporting. The result is a line-drive hit of a book, one that would make Gehrig and Mr. Ripken proud. "The book uses historical study and new reporting to explain how Gehrig and Ripken did it and why it mattered. It tackles the allure of human endurance and the pitfalls of fame, but it is mostly a baseball book for baseball fans. It succeeds as both a thorough accounting and a love note to the game . . . Eisenberg dives into the evolution of the public's view of consecutive-game streaks, from ignorance in the earliest days through fixation during Ripken's run. The prose is straightforward, and the details are rich. The depth of his research about Gehrig and his precursors delights . . . "The Streak" is a worthy study of those who played with more reliability than any others." Eisenberg's impressively researched effort is a terrific tribute." Publishers Weekly "Eisenberg examines one of baseball's most venerated records while exploring what it all means, providing a compelling, thought-provoking history for fans of America's grand game." Kirkus Reviews "A readable and comprehensive look at one of baseball's most arcane but incredible accomplishments." Library Journal "What makes The Streak such a superb baseball book is the gorgeous weaving of two gripping narratives into one. Cal Ripken, Jr. is fascinating. Lou Gehrig is fascinating. Together, with John Eisenberg's deft touch, the reader is gifted with a saga for the ages." Jeff Pearlman, author of *Gunslinger* and Showtime "I lived the Cal Ripken story, working for the Baltimore Evening Sun when Cal was drafted and cultivated in the Oriole system. I thought I knew everything about him...until I read this book. John Eisenberg has unearthed the real story of Cal and bookended it with Iron Horse. Spectacular." Dan Shaughnessy, author of *Francona* (with Terry Francona) and *Reversing the Curse*

JOHN EISENBERG was an award-winning sports columnist for the Baltimore Sun for two decades and is the author of *Ten-Gallon War*, *That First Season*, *My Guy Barbaro* (cowritten with jockey Edgar Prado), and *The Great Match Race*. He has written for *Smithsonian*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Details*, among other publications, and currently contributes columns to BaltimoreRavens.com. He lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

First of all this is not a book solely about the consecutive game playing streaks of Lou Gehrig and Cal Ripken Jr. The vast majority of the book focuses on games in which the streak of each man was

endangered due to illness or injury. The remainder of the book deals with consecutive game playing streaks of Dale Murphy, Steve Garvey, Billy Williams, and a few others who managed to put together consecutive game playing streaks of their own. Emphasis is also placed on Everett Scott who preceded Lou Gehrig with a playing streak of his own and eventually was surpassed by Gehrig. The book concludes with reasons why managers choose to rest their players periodically rather than get caught up in the day-to-day grind of playing every day. Ripken's record, like Cy Young's record of 511 victories will never be surpassed. Can you imagine a pitcher winning 20 games for 20 years and still being 111 games short of reaching Cy Young's record? Eight pages of photographs are devoted to players who put together consecutive game playing streaks. I did find one error in the book on page 197 in which the author referred to sportswriter Richards Vidmer as "Richard." I know! Picky! Picky!

Lou Gehrig, baseball's "Iron Horse" set the consecutive games played record by playing in 2,130 consecutive games. He shattered the record previously held by Everett Scott. Decades later, Gehrig would have his own streak shattered by Cal Ripken, Jr., who would go on to play in 2,632 consecutive games. In this fine book, author John Eisenberg delves into these great streaks and the impact they had on the game of baseball. Gehrig played all of his games during the day, while Ripken played mostly at night. Both dealt with injuries, many of which would have kept other players out of the line up. Each faced questions about their streaks, and many wondered if they would have been better off taking a day or two off on occasion. Were they hurting their teams by continuing to play when they were injured or slumping? How did the streaks of Gehrig and Ripken compare? Who's was more difficult? Gehrig played fewer games each season and also didn't benefit from the medical care that Ripken did. Travel was another factor. Gehrig rode the train on road trips, while Ripken flew on jet aircraft. But one thing is clear; each man was in incredible physical shape and also benefited from a fair amount of good luck. Many thought that Gehrig's streak would never be broken, but it's pretty much a guarantee that Ripken's streak will never be touched. I'm a big baseball fan, and I really enjoyed this book. Eisenberg not only looks at Ripken and Gehrig, but he also examines the streaks of Stan Musial, Billy Williams, Steve Garvey, and others. Several of these players amassed streaks of over one thousand games. Today's game has changed so much that it's almost inconceivable that anyone would even come close to Ripken. Along with Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak and Cy Young's 511 career wins, Ripken's streak will probably never be broken.

This is an ambitious and monumental accomplishment by John Eisenberg...as I say, his White Album. As he recounts in the Acknowledgements, this book took longer for him to write than any of his others. If you read The Streak, you'll see why! The sheer amount of research and work that he put into it might even rival the endurance and fortitude of a Gehrig or Ripken. Even though I am not much of a baseball fan (no doubt a by-product of rooting for the Texas Rangers all my life) Eisenberg's Streak is so well written that it gave me an appreciation for the game I've never known before. Beyond that, I just like his writing style. You will, too. This guy has been a professional sports writer for more than 35 years and it shows! For me, the first chapter is one of the strongest in the book and the author takes a calculated risk in giving us the "punch line" right up front. I also loved chapter 14 because it's about Babe Ruth. After reading his first chapter, I fretted as to how he was going to maintain my interest the rest of the way. And in all honesty, there is indeed some letdown after Ripken's historic record-breaking night. How could it not be? But Eisenberg is able to overcome much of this by interweaving the two stories of Gehrig and Ripken in such a way that sets the reader up for a very strong finish. By the time we get to the end of the book, we want to see Ripken's victory lap again - and Eisenberg gives it to us. But this time, we have a much deeper appreciation for what these icons went through to accomplish these streaks. If I were a bigger baseball fan, all the statistics would have been a lot more interesting to me. On the other hand, if you're a true fan of the game, this is a must read.

Good author, great read

Gripping! Many new insights to both of these baseball giants

Great book. I couldn't put it down

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