

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SMITHSONIAN CHANNEL™ AND MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL  
TEAM UP TO PROFILE FOUR OF THE  
NATIONAL PASTIME'S MOST ICONIC PLAYERS  
MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS**

**PREMIERES MONDAY, FEBRUARY 29 AT 8PM ET/PT**

**EMMY® WINNER MARTIN SHEEN NARRATES SERIES OF ONE-HOUR PROGRAMS  
THAT OPENS WITH BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL ON HANK AARON**



**NEW YORK, January 20, 2016** – Smithsonian Channel and Major League Baseball have teamed up to tell the stories of four players who transcended the National Pastime and left legacies as true American icons: Hank Aaron, who surmounted racism in the Deep South and became baseball's home run king; Babe Ruth, who emerged from a troubled youth to become America's first superstar celebrity; Lou Gehrig, the embodiment of integrity who achieved immortality for his bravery in facing a terrible disease that now bears his name; and Ted Williams, who aspired to be the greatest hitter ever and inspired generations with his quest for perfection. MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS will premiere over four consecutive Monday nights beginning February 29 at 8 p.m. ET/PT with a special Black History Month presentation of MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: HANK AARON.

Each of the specials is narrated by Emmy® and Golden Globe® winner Martin Sheen. The stories take an in-depth look at the history, psychology and mythology of each of the Baseball Hall of Famers. Providing context throughout each of the programs are a host of journalists, academics, sports figures, and even a mythologist. They include Deadspin founder Will Leitch, ESPN's Howard Bryant, best-selling author Jane Leavy, National Museum of African American History and Culture curator Damion Thomas, author Phil Cousineau and basketball coaching legend Bobby Knight, among others.

**MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: HANK AARON**

*Premieres Monday, February 29 at 8 p.m. ET/PT.*

This special Black History Month presentation features extensive newly-captured interviews with Aaron himself, as he discusses his upbringing in Mobile, Alabama and the challenges that he faced growing up in the heart of Jim Crow. “The Hammer” would continue to battle bigotry and racism throughout his life and baseball career. As he sought to unseat Babe Ruth as the all-time home run king, Aaron received numerous death threats and hate mail, making his feat all the more impressive. It seemed justly symbolic that he hit number 715 on April 8, 1974, in Atlanta, the epicenter of the Civil Rights movement.

### **MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: BABE RUTH**

*Premieres Monday, March 7 at 8 p.m. ET/PT.*

Before “The Babe,” the all-time home run record stood at 138. Babe Ruth retired with 714. With his immensely powerful swing and unmatched zest for life, the incorrigible boy from Baltimore became the template for the modern superstar. One of American history’s most fascinating and enduring individuals, George Herman Ruth remains a mythical titan who reminds us that truth is often greater than fiction. While his baseball achievements rewrote the record book and his popularity set attendance records, MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: BABE RUTH details the complex origin story behind the game’s dominant figure.

### **MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: LOU GEHRIG**

*Premieres Monday, March 14 at 8 p.m. ET/PT.*

Integrity, honesty, and dedication to family guided his every move. His body, which as a small child was considered chubby, would, as an adult, inspire comparisons to a god. Lou Gehrig’s record of playing in 2,130 consecutive games would stand for more than 60 years, but, it would be the revelation of his humanity and grace in the face of impending death that would place him among the immortals. In a ceremony after he retired, upon learning that he had Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, he delivered the famous “Luckiest Man” speech, which is still recognized as one of the greatest moments in American sports history.

### **MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: TED WILLIAMS**

*Premieres Monday, March 21 at 8 p.m. ET/PT.*

The quest for perfection is mankind’s boldest pursuit. It demands supreme skill, flawless precision, and obsessive determination. For most, the mission is too much. This special reveals that Ted Williams was the rare figure capable of summoning the impossible. His goal was to be considered the greatest hitter who ever lived, and his success captured the heart of the exacting, but loyal, Boston fan base. At the peak of his career, coming off a season in which he batted .406 and then one in which he captured baseball’s elusive Triple Crown, Williams interrupted his Hall of Fame career to serve three years in the Navy and Marine Corps during World War II. In his time in the military, he became a master fighter pilot. Away from the baseball field and battlefield, Williams turned to fly fishing, another forum for his extreme focus.

MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS ([www.smithsonianchannel.com/mlb](http://www.smithsonianchannel.com/mlb)) is produced by Major League Baseball for Smithsonian Channel. Executive producers on MAJOR LEAGUE

LEGENDS: HANK AARON are Josh Oshinsky and Jonathan Laureano; Executive Producers on MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: BABE RUTH are Oshinsky and Jeff Spaulding; Executive Producer on MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: LOU GEHRIG is James Potocki; Executive producer on MAJOR LEAGUE LEGENDS: TED WILLIAMS is Gary Waksman. David Royle and Charles Poe served as executive producers for Smithsonian Channel.

Smithsonian Channel™, owned by Smithsonian Networks™, a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, is where curiosity lives, inspiration strikes and wonders never cease. This is the place for awe-inspiring stories, powerful documentaries and amazing entertainment across multiple platforms. Smithsonian Channel combines the storytelling prowess of SHOWTIME® with the unmatched resources and rich traditions of the Smithsonian, to create award-winning programming that shines new light on popular genres such as air and space, history, science, nature, and pop culture. Among the network's offerings are series including *Aerial America*, *Million Dollar American Princesses*, *Boomtowners*, *Mighty Ships*, *Mighty Planes* and *Air Disasters*, as well as critically-acclaimed specials that include *Civil War 360*, *9/11: The Heartland Tapes*; *MLK: The Assassination Tapes* and *The Day Kennedy Died*. Find out more at [www.smithsonianchannel.com](http://www.smithsonianchannel.com). Smithsonian Networks also operates Smithsonian Earth™, through SN Digital LLC., a new subscription video streaming service delivering spectacular original nature and wildlife content.

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