

THE SPORTIER

Henry “Hank” Aaron

Hank Aaron, one of the greatest players in baseball history, who held the career home run record for 33 years, passed away Friday at the age of 86. Not only was Aaron a fantastic athlete, but he overcame adversity to reach the spotlight of American culture as one of the most famous baseball players ever. Growing up poor in Mobile, Alabama, Aaron had to learn the fundamentals of baseball on his own. Unfortunately, even though Aaron, an African-American, possessed loads of talent, he was unable to play high school baseball due to schools only carrying all-white teams. This was around the time that Jackie Robinson had broken the color barrier in Major League Baseball in 1947, and while America was becoming more accepting of African-Americans. It is clear through Aaron's story that he still faced adversity throughout his life. In 1954, at the age of 20, after stints in both the Negro Leagues and Minor Leagues, Aaron was thrust into the MLB with the then-Milwaukee Braves. Even though Aaron played for smaller market teams his whole career, playing in either Milwaukee or for the newly-relocated Atlanta Braves, Aaron was recognized as one of the best in the league due to his consistent play. In his career, Aaron not only hit at least 30 home runs 15 different times, but his rare combination of power and contact allowed him to hit the .300 batting average mark 14 times in his career. Aaron's greatness is reflected in the records that he still holds to this day, including most RBIs (2,297), extra-base hits (1,477), and total bases (6,856). Additionally, he ranks third all-time in hits (3,771) only trailing Pete Rose and Ty Cobb. But of course, Hank Aaron, nicknamed "Hammerin' Hank," is best known for his home run hitting ability. Aaron did not garner the national spotlight until 1973, when he was in the chase for Babe Ruth's seemingly elusive home run record, which sat at 714. Sadly, many Americans were upset that Aaron was chasing down Ruth's record, as he received many death threats leading up to the historic moment. Despite this, Aaron was able to blow through the record on April 8th, 1974, eventually retiring with a home run total of 755. In August of 2007, one of the most controversial players in MLB history, Barry Bonds, broke Aaron's record, although it was revealed that Bonds had used PEDs during his career. Other than his on-field accomplishments, Aaron was a civil rights activist. Keeping all of his death threats as a reminder of the hatred thrown his way, Aaron became one of the first African-Americans to receive a senior management position in baseball, becoming a Senior Vice President of the Atlanta Braves. Hank Aaron was not only a fantastic baseball player, but he was a great man that will be dearly missed by the global community.

Green Bay's Run Ends

Unfortunately, it looks as though State Farm will not be able to secure a Patrick Mahomes-Aaron Rodgers Super Bowl matchup. The Buccaneers offense in the first half was firing on all cylinders, as they scored touchdowns on three of their five first-half drives. This included a 39-yard strike from the arm of Brady into the hands of Bucs receiver Scotty Miller with only 8 seconds remaining on the clock before the break. In the half, the Packers and Aaron Rodgers did not seem to be nearly as explosive as usual. The Packers' first drive resulted in a punt, and even though their next drive was a success after a 50-yard touchdown pass to Marquez Valdez-Scantling, the Packers' first half essentially ended there. After a crucial, uncharacteristic dropped pass in the red zone by Packers star receiver Davante Adams, the Packers could only muster a total of 10 first half points, which has not happened since Week 5 of the regular season, in a meeting against none other than the Buccaneers. Rodgers had one of his only 6 interceptions this year in the first half, which allowed for the Buccaneers' last minute heave into the end-zone. It was evident that, after four first half sacks, the Buccaneers' defense was causing issues for Rodgers and his offense, reflected in the 21-10 score at the half. The second half saw a complete change. The second half did start off poorly for the Packers, as a fumble by running back Aaron Jones on the first drive of the half also unfortunately sent him out of the game with an injury. The Packers got the ball back down 28-10, but Rodgers was able to use his arm to gain yards in bunches, including a 24 yard gain to Valdez-Scantling, eventually leading to a touchdown. This is where Brady and the Bucs began to freeze up in Green Bay. On three straight drives, Brady threw passes intended for the Buccaneers' star wideout Mike Evans, and all three ended up in the hands of a Packer. The first was clearly Evans' fault, as the ball glanced off of his hands and popped up, but the second one was a bit overthrown, and unfortunately Evans tipped the ball and gave it enough airtime to reach the defense. The final pick was a combination of Brady getting nervous and poor blocking, as Tampa Bay running back Leonard Fournette was unable to stop a rusher from having a clear path at Brady, but Brady reacted too quickly and heaved a ball up to Packers cornerback Jaire Alexander. These turnovers, in the most critical of situations, only resulted in 6 total points for the Packers after a failed two-point conversion attempt on a dropped pass. The Packers had one final shot down 8 with over four and a half minutes to play. After getting to the Tampa Bay 8 yard line, the most controversial sequence of the year occurred. First, on third and goal, Aaron Rodgers nearly crossed the line of scrimmage in what seemed to be an attempt to run the ball into the end zone. While there were some defenders in the area, he seemingly had a shot at reaching the goal line. Instead, Rodgers threw a pass to a covered Davante Adams that was knocked away. On fourth and goal, with only 2 minutes to play, the Packers decided to kick a field goal instead of going for it on fourth down. If they had converted on fourth down with a touchdown and a two point conversion, the game would have been tied. After successfully getting the field goal, the Packers' defense marched onto the field to make one last stop. On 3rd and 4, right as the Packers were about to get a stop, a clear pass interference penalty was committed by the Packers, as one of the defenders held onto a Buccaneers' receiver's jersey. Even though the flag was thrown well late, the call was made, securing a Bucs Super Bowl appearance. While Brady and the Bucs will become the first team to play a Super Bowl in their home stadium, the Packers will yet again be disappointed in the Conference Championship, unable to capitalize when the game was on the line.

Sources:

ESPN, Baseball Hall of Fame, Baseball Reference, The Philadelphia Inquirer, MLB, CBS Sports, ESPN, ESPN