

Aaron Judge hits 61st home run to tie Roger Maris' record

SEP 28, 2022 / BY MIKE GAVIN



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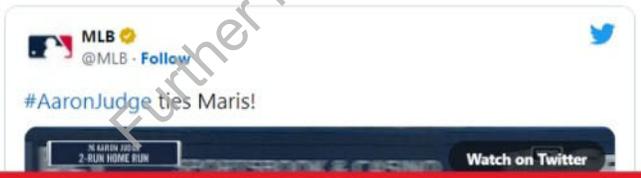


It was in 1961 that a New York Yankees outfielder hit his 61st home run of the season.

It was 61 years later, almost to the day, that it happened again:

Aaron Judge on Wednesday did what Roger Maris did more than six decades ago, crushing his 61st home run as history repeated itself. The two Yankees now share the American League single-season record, as Babe Ruth falls to third with his 60-home run season in 1927.

The two-run blast came in the seventh inning against the Blue Jays in Toronto, with the score tied 3-3, and it landed in the Blue Jays' bullpen. Toronto lefty Tim Mayza surrendered the record-tying shot, while Jays bullpen coach Matt Buschmann caught the historic ball.



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The 61 home runs hit by Judge and Maris, tied for seventh most overall in a single season, is a number that many argue is the true record given the speculation of performance enhancing drug use by those who surpassed it.

Barry Bonds holds the overall record with 73 home runs in 2001, topping the 70 hit by Mark McGwire and 66 by Sammy Sosa during the home run chase of 1998. That duo combined to eclipse the 60-mark five times over a four-season stretch, with McGwire hitting 65 home runs in 1999 and Sosa crushing 64 in 2001 and 63 in 1999.



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Maris hit his 61st home run in the Yankees' 163rd and final game of the regular season, topping the record set by Ruth over a 154-game season in 1927. The disparity of games led then-MLB commissioner Ford Frick to make a mid-season declaration regarding the home run record, appeasing those who resented Maris for chasing the mythical Ruth and his sacred number.

"If the player does not hit more than 60 until after the club has played 154 games, there would have to be some distinctive mark in the record books to show that Babe Ruth's record was set under a 154-game schedule and the total of more than 60 was compiled while a 162-game schedule was in effect," Frick said.

An asterisk was attached to the 61 home-run total for three decades, with Ruth and Maris separated in the baseball record book by games played. That changed in 1991, six years after Maris' death, when then-commissioner Fay Vincent organized a committee that deemed the record belonged solely to Maris.

He, once again, has company in the record books ... for now.

Now that he has hit his 61st, Judge will look to set the new American League record on Thursday when the Yankees host the Baltimore Orioles. He needs two home runs to tie Sosa with 63 for sixth most in a single season.

With seven games remaining, Judge is on pace to hit 63 home runs, per FanGraphs.

Judge entered Wednesday's game having gone seven games without homering since hitting his 60th of the season against the Pirates last Tuesday. In the final five games of the Yankees' six-game homestand, he went 4-for-15 with six walks, six strikeouts and no RBIs. With that home run drought - shy of his longest of the season, which was nine games in August - Judge was unable to tie the record in front of the home crowd at Yankee Stadium.

The 30-year-old outfielder also leads the AL with a .314 average and 130 RBIs, putting him in contention to win the Triple Crown, which has been accomplished just 12 times by 10 players in major league history.

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A California native drafted by the Yankees in the first round of the 2013 draft, Judge hit 52 home runs during his rookie season in 2017. His 61 home runs and counting this year is the most hit in a single season since his Yankees teammate Giancarlo Stanton hit 59 while with the Miami Marlins in 2017.

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