

HISTORY OF BRITISH BASEBALL

THE BEGINNINGS

The exact origins of baseball are unknown, but historians agree that the roots of the sport lie in England. In the early 19th century, the sport was played throughout the British Isles, known by names such as "townball," "base," and, finally, "baseball."



The first recorded game of baseball took place in 1749 at Walton-on-Thames, with the Frederick, the Prince of Wales himself playing.

BaseballSoftballUK and Walton Cricket Club are hosting a blue plaque event on 7 July to mark this historic occasion - more information at baseballsoftballuk.com



1874 Philadelphia Athletics in uniform



THE AMERICAN GAME

In America, a form of baseball derived from rounders emerged before the Civil War and the first professional league was formed in 1871. By the early 20th century, the American and National Leagues existed, with teams in most big Eastern cities. The game took off in the 1920s around the home run exploits of Babe Ruth and expanded further when the colour bar was broken by Jackie Robinson in 1947. The game spread to all corners of the US (and Canada) from the late 1950s on until today MLB has 30 teams in cities from coast to coast, with countless minor league and independent teams in smaller cities and towns.



THE GAME NOW

Baseball is often seen as an American sport, but today there are more than 35 million players in 122 countries on every continent. The game was introduced in Japan in the 1870s and pro leagues existed there by the 1930s. Americans introduced the game to Cuba in the 1860s, and Cuban immigrants spread the sport throughout Latin America. Baseball in Britain dates back to the 1890s, and it flourished here as a professional sport before World War II. In 1938, Britain won the first-ever Baseball World Championship by defeating a US Olympic team by four games to one on British soil. Today, over 70 teams compete in leagues around the UK, and there are thousands of teams across Europe.

Background Photo: Babe Ruth,
former Red Sox and Yankees player
Baseball Hall of Famer