Exhibition Exploring Baseball and American Culture Opens April 3 at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History

“Baseball As America,” the first major exhibition to examine the relationship between baseball and American culture, will be on view at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History from April 3 to Oct. 3, 2004. The exhibition explores baseball's enduring impact on American society, touching on a broad range of themes including immigration, nationalism, integration, technology and popular culture. Like the game itself, “Baseball As America” draws on the hopes and dreams of people of all ages and all cultural heritages. In doing so, it reveals how baseball has reflected and even shaped America's national identity. “Baseball As America” was organized by The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York.

The exhibition's appearance at the Smithsonian is part of a four-year, 10-city, nationwide tour, marking the first time treasures from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum have ever left their legendary home.

The national tour of “Baseball As America” is sponsored by Ernst & Young. The exhibition's Washington appearance is sponsored by Bank of America.

“‘Baseball As America’ is an in-depth look at the game of baseball as a cultural phenomenon," said Cristián Samper, director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. "The exhibition provides a revealing, inspiring, humorous and dramatic perspective on ‘America's Game.’ It will foster a new appreciation not only of the game, but also of our national character. As one of the world’s preeminent centers for the study of human culture, we are proud to include ‘Baseball As America’ among our already-significant anthropological presentations."
National Tour

“Baseball As America” premiered in New York City at the American Museum of Natural History in March 2002. It has also appeared at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County; the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago; the Cincinnati Museum Center; and Florida International Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida.

After the Smithsonian, the exhibition will travel to the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and two other venues. For more information about the exhibition, visit www.baseballasamerica.org.

"Baseball is the National Pastime," said Jane Forbes Clark, chairman of the board of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. "The Game symbolizes the fabric of our society in its sportsmanship, ingenuity and teamwork. As the institutional and spiritual home of The Game, we have an even greater responsibility to examine the deeper significance of baseball and reveal its enduring relevance to this great country and all Americans."

Exhibition Highlights

• The game's most revered relic, the Doubleday Ball, from baseball's “mythical” first game in 1839
• Jackie Robinson's 1956 Brooklyn Dodger's jersey
• Artifacts from the All American Girls Professional Baseball League
• Record-setting bats from the Mark McGwire-Sammy Sosa home run chase of 1998, as well as those of Babe Ruth and Roger Maris
• President Franklin Roosevelt's January 15, 1942, "Green Light" letter calling for the continuation of professional baseball as a way to heighten morale during World War II
• Norman Rockwell's 1949 painting, “The Three Umpires”
• "Shoeless" Joe Jackson's shoes
• The most valuable baseball card in the world - the T206 Honus Wagner card from 1909

Public Programs

• Discover Cart Programs: Carts will be set up in various locations en route to the “Baseball As America” exhibition in the Asia Pacific Hall on the first floor where visitors can have hands-on experience learning about the science behind baseball.
• Hands-on Activities in the Discovery Room: Children will be able to touch and try on replica uniforms and baseball gear to discover similarities and differences in objects such as bases and gloves by comparing and contrasting and considering the different purposes of these objects.
• Performances in the Discovery Room – April 3, 2004 ONLY: Rochel Garner Coleman will
recreate the life and times of "Cool Papa" Bell and his journey as an African American Baseball player in the Negro Leagues in a children’s performance titled “Shadowball—the Story of ‘Cool Papa’Bell.” Three free performances in the Discovery Room, Sat., April 3, at 1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., and 3:00 p.m. Seating is limited; timed tickets will be distributed at the Discover Carts.

Publication: *Baseball As America*

The exhibition is accompanied by a major publication, also entitled *Baseball As America*, published by the National Geographic Society. The book expands on the themes of the exhibition and is illustrated with images of objects in the exhibition as well as historical photographs. A unique compendium, featuring 45 newly-commissioned and 30 classic essays, commentaries and literature from a wide spectrum of writers, commentators, scholars and humorists, the book has 320 pages with 200 illustrations, many of them in full-color.

**National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum**

The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum preserves history, honors excellence and connects generations. An independent, not-for-profit educational institution dedicated to fostering an appreciation of the historical development of baseball and its impact on our culture, the Hall of Fame was established in Cooperstown, New York in 1939 as the definitive repository of The Game’s treasures. With more than 35,000 artifacts and 2.6 million documents, recordings and photographs, the Hall of Fame displays and interprets its vast collections for a global audience. The Hall of Fame also bestows the highest individual honor awarded to players of our national pastime by marking their achievements with a plaque in the Hall of Fame Gallery. For more information about the Hall of Fame, visit its web site at [www.baseballhalloffame.org](http://www.baseballhalloffame.org) or call 888-HALL-OF-FAME.

**National Museum of Natural History**

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, in Washington, D.C., is the most visited natural history museum in the world. Opened in 1910, the Museum is dedicated to maintaining and preserving the world's most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. It also fosters critical scientific research as well as educational programs and exhibitions that present the work of its scientists and curators to the public. The Museum is part of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum and research complex. The Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History is open every day 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Special summer hours, 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., commence May 27 through Labor Day. Admission is free. The Museum’s web site is: [www.mnh.si.edu](http://www.mnh.si.edu).

NOTE TO EDITORS: Images from the “Baseball as America” exhibition are on a Smithsonian ftp site. To access the site, use a Web browser (Internet Explorer, Netscape) and type the following information: [http://160.111.16.40](http://160.111.16.40). Images may also be obtained by calling the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History’s Office of Public Affairs at 202-786-2950.

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