

Starting Line-Up

Complete Performance Instructions

Effect

Five envelopes are shown. Each envelope contains the name of one of the greatest baseball players to ever play the game.

A spectator mixes the envelopes, chooses a number, helps decide the line-up, and even has the option to switch some of the players around.

In the end, the line-up they created matches your prediction.

Required Players

You will use five baseball player cards:

- Babe Ruth
 - Willie Mays
 - Lou Gehrig
 - Jackie Robinson
 - Hank Aaron
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The Secret

The secret is that **Lou Gehrig must end up in the center position.**

Once Lou Gehrig is in the center, the remaining players are controlled by two groups:

- **Right In** players go directly beside Lou Gehrig.
- **Left Out** players go on the far left and far right.

The final structure will always be:

Left Out — Right In — Lou Gehrig — Right In — Left Out

This allows the spectator to make choices, but those choices remain controlled within the correct groups.

Envelope Marking System

Each player card goes inside a secretly marked envelope.

The envelopes are marked by clipping the corners.

Important:

Read the markings while looking at the **back side of the envelope**, meaning the side **without the flap**.

Envelope Mark	Player	Group
No corners cut	Lou Gehrig	Center
Right corners cut	Willie Mays	Right In
Right corners cut	Jackie Robinson	Right In
Left corners cut	Babe Ruth	Left Out
Left corners cut	Hank Aaron	Left Out

Memory Aid

Right In

The envelopes with the **right corners cut** are the **Right In** envelopes.

They go **right in beside Lou Gehrig**.

These contain:

- Willie Mays
- Jackie Robinson

Left Out

The envelopes with the **left corners cut** are the **Left Out** envelopes.

They go on the **outside** ends of the line-up.

These contain:

- Babe Ruth
 - Hank Aaron
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Prediction Set-Up Using a Humber Envelope

Your prediction is carried inside a **Humber envelope**, allowing you to show one of two possible prediction sides.

The key is to watch which **Right In** player ends up next to **Babe Ruth**.

Prepare the Humber envelope as follows:

Top Side

Place the prediction that begins with:

Babe Ruth — Willie Mays

Back Side

Place the prediction that begins with:

Babe Ruth — Jackie Robinson

This works because Babe Ruth will always be one of the **Left Out** players, and either Willie Mays or Jackie Robinson will end up directly beside him.

During the reveal, simply notice which player is next to Babe Ruth.

- If Babe Ruth is next to **Willie Mays**, open the side containing the **Babe Ruth — Willie Mays** prediction.
- If Babe Ruth is next to **Jackie Robinson**, open the side containing the **Babe Ruth — Jackie Robinson** prediction.

That one observation tells you which side of the Humber envelope to open.

Full Set-Up

1. Place **Lou Gehrig** into the envelope with **no cut corners**.
2. Place **Willie Mays** into one of the envelopes with the **right corners cut**.
3. Place **Jackie Robinson** into the other envelope with the **right corners cut**.
4. Place **Babe Ruth** into one of the envelopes with the **left corners cut**.
5. Place **Hank Aaron** into the other envelope with the **left corners cut**.
6. Prepare your Humber envelope with the two prediction options:
 - **Top side:** Babe Ruth — Willie Mays
 - **Back side:** Babe Ruth — Jackie Robinson

Opening Patter

Begin with the five envelopes in your hands.

Say:

“I have to be honest with you. I’ve never played fantasy baseball before, but I thought I would give it a try.”

“I figured, how hard could it be? You just pick the best players, right?”

“So I picked five of the greatest baseball players to ever play the game.”

Pause.

“The only problem is, no one told me the players had to be alive.”

“They were all dead. So needless to say, I didn’t do very well.”

“But it got me thinking. If you really had five of the greatest players in baseball history, how would you decide who bats first? Who bats second? Who goes in the middle of the line-up?”

“So tonight, we’re going to let fate decide.”

Display the five envelopes.

Say:

“Inside these five envelopes are five legendary baseball players. I don’t want to decide the order. You are going to help build the starting line-up.”

Mixing the Envelopes

Hand the five envelopes to the spectator.

Say:

“Mix these up so neither one of us knows where anyone is.”

Allow the spectator to mix the envelopes.

Take the envelopes back and place them in a row on the table.

As you place the envelopes down, secretly identify the envelope with **no cut corners**. This is the Lou Gehrig envelope.

You must make sure the Lou Gehrig envelope ends up in either the **second** or **fourth** position in the row.

This allows you to force Lou Gehrig as the center player.

Forcing Lou Gehrig to the Center

Once the five envelopes are in a row, say:

“We need to start by choosing the player who will go right in the center of the line-up. Give me any number between one and five.”

Your goal is to land on Lou Gehrig.

Because you placed Lou Gehrig in either the second or fourth position, you can count from whichever side is needed.

If the spectator says 2

Count from the side that lands on Lou Gehrig.

Say:

“One, two. Perfect. This will be our center player.”

Place that envelope in the center of the table.

If the spectator says 4

Count from the opposite side so you still land on Lou Gehrig.

Say:

“One, two, three, four. That brings us to this envelope. This will be our center player.”

Place that envelope in the center of the table.

If the spectator says 3

Use the fact that three is the center number in a five-player line-up.

Write the number **3** on the inside of the Lou Gehrig envelope and show it.

Say:

“That is interesting. You chose number three, and in a five-player line-up, number three is the center. So this envelope goes right in the middle.”

Place Lou Gehrig’s envelope in the center of the table.

Do not reveal the card yet.

Then say:

“Every great line-up needs strength in the middle. We’ll let fate decide that this player bats right in the center.”

Placing the Right In Players

Next, pick up the two envelopes with the **right corners cut**.

These are the **Right In** envelopes. They contain:

- Willie Mays
- Jackie Robinson

Say:

“We have our center player. Now we need two players to protect him in the line-up. One will bat just before him, and one will bat just after him.”

Hold up the two Right In envelopes.

Say:

“I’m going to let you decide. One of these goes to the left of the center card, and one goes to the right.”

Ask:

“Which one should go on the left?”

Place the chosen envelope to the left of the center envelope.

Say:

“Then this one goes on the right.”

Place the other Right In envelope to the right of the center envelope.

At this point, the middle of the line-up is complete:

Right In — Lou Gehrig — Right In

Placing the Left Out Players

Now pick up the two envelopes with the **left corners cut**.

These are the **Left Out** envelopes. They contain:

- Babe Ruth
- Hank Aaron

Say:

“That leaves us with two more players. One will lead off the line-up, and one will finish it.”

Hold up the two Left Out envelopes.

Say:

“Again, you decide. Which one should go all the way on the left?”

Place the chosen envelope on the far left.

Say:

“Then the last one goes all the way on the right.”

Place the final envelope on the far right.

The complete layout is now:

Left Out — Right In — Lou Gehrig — Right In — Left Out

Optional Final Switches

To make the procedure feel even fairer, you may offer the spectator a final chance to change their mind.

Point to the two inner envelopes beside Lou Gehrig.

Say:

“Before we lock this in, you can change your mind. These two players are batting right beside the center player. Would you like to leave them where they are, or switch them?”

If they say switch, switch only the two **Right In** envelopes.

Then point to the two outside envelopes.

Say:

“And the outside players, the lead-off spot and the final spot, would you like to leave those alone, or switch them?”

If they say switch, switch only the two **Left Out** envelopes.

Then say:

“So just to be clear, you mixed the envelopes, you chose the center player, you decided who went to the left and right of center, and you even had the chance to change the final batting order.”

Revealing the Player Cards

Now open the envelopes one at a time and remove the player cards.

Say:

“Let’s see what fate gave us.”

Display the final line-up.

As the names are revealed, pay attention to where **Babe Ruth** is located and which player is directly beside him.

The player next to Babe Ruth will be either:

- Willie Mays
- Jackie Robinson

This tells you which side of the Humber envelope to open.

Revealing the Prediction

After the cards are visible, say:

“Before we began, I made one prediction. Not just of the players, but of the exact starting line-up fate would create.”

Pick up the Humber envelope.

Secretly note which player is next to Babe Ruth.

If Babe Ruth is next to Willie Mays

Open the side of the Humber envelope containing the prediction that begins:

Babe Ruth — Willie Mays

If Babe Ruth is next to Jackie Robinson

Open the side of the Humber envelope containing the prediction that begins:

Babe Ruth — Jackie Robinson

Remove the correct prediction.

Say:

“If this worked, your line-up should match my prediction exactly.”

Read the prediction beginning with Babe Ruth.

For example:

“Babe Ruth...”

Then continue through the line-up in the order shown on the prediction.

Why You Always Start with Babe Ruth

The tabled line-up may read left to right or right to left depending on the spectator's choices.

However, your prediction always begins with **Babe Ruth**.

This makes the reveal simple.

You only need to know one thing:

Who is next to Babe Ruth?

- If Babe Ruth is next to Willie Mays, reveal the **Babe Ruth — Willie Mays** prediction side.
- If Babe Ruth is next to Jackie Robinson, reveal the **Babe Ruth — Jackie Robinson** prediction side.

That is the entire decision.

Suggested Closing Lines

After showing the prediction, you can say:

“That is the greatest fantasy baseball team that never had a chance of winning... because unfortunately, none of them could show up for the game.”

Or:

“So maybe I'm still not ready for fantasy baseball... but when it comes to fantasy predictions, I think I'm batting a thousand.”

Performer's Summary

The secret handling is:

1. Spectator mixes the five envelopes.
2. As you lay them down, place the unmarked Lou Gehrig envelope in position **2** or **4**.
3. Ask for a number between 1 and 5.
4. Use the number to force Lou Gehrig to the center.
5. Place the two **Right In** envelopes beside Lou Gehrig.
6. Place the two **Left Out** envelopes on the outside.
7. Allow optional swaps within each pair.
8. Reveal the player cards.

9. Notice who is next to Babe Ruth.
 10. Open the correct side of the Himber envelope.
 11. Reveal the matching prediction.
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Quick Reference

Player Groups

Group	Players	Envelope Mark
Center	Lou Gehrig	No corners cut
Right In	Willie Mays and Jackie Robinson	Right corners cut
Left Out	Babe Ruth and Hank Aaron	Left corners cut

Final Layout Structure

Left Out — Right In — Lou Gehrig — Right In — Left Out

Himber Envelope Key

Player Next to Babe Ruth Open Prediction Side

Willie Mays	Babe Ruth — Willie Mays
Jackie Robinson	Babe Ruth — Jackie Robinson

Memory Phrase

Right In goes right in beside Lou Gehrig.

Left Out goes on the outside.