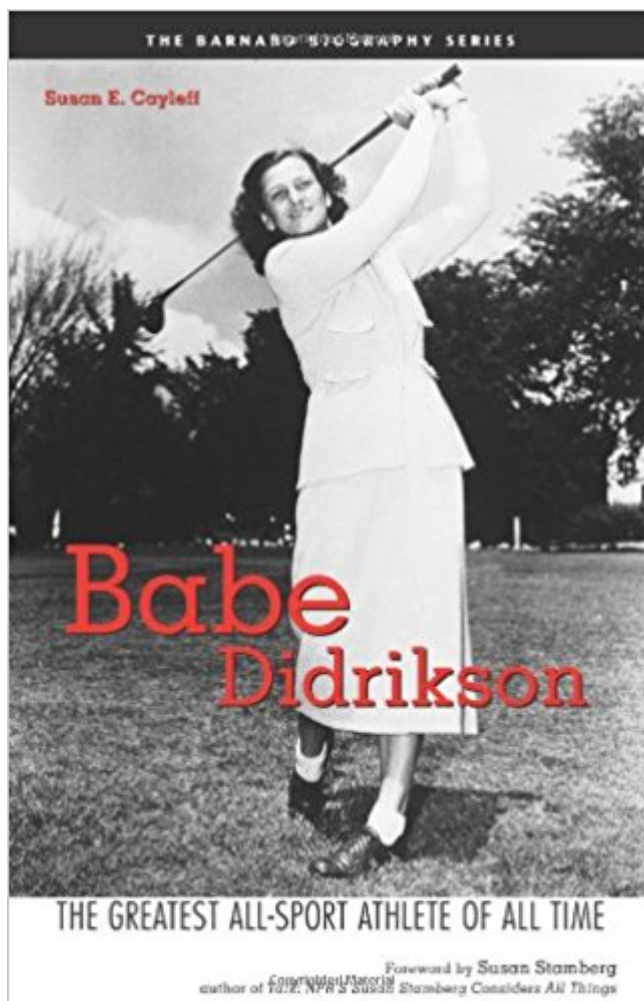




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# Babe Didrikson: The Greatest All-Sport Athlete Of All Time



## Synopsis

A gold medal Olympian, Babe Didrikson, recently rated by ESPN as one of the top ten athletes of the twentieth century, excelled at every sport she tried: running, jumping, javelin throwing, swimming, basketball, tennis, golf, and baseball. Gifted and controversial, Babe's athletic prowess and personality took the country by storm from the 1930s to the 1950s. From Texas tomboy to sports superstar, Babe set the bar for every female athlete who would follow her and opened the world's eyes to what one dedicated woman can achieve. Author Susan E. Cayleff, whose adult biography of Babe Didrikson was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, now brings the rousing true-life story of Babe to today's young women.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr. 7-12. In her forward, National Public Radio's commentator Susan Stamberg writes of Didrikson, "As you read her life, you may find her to be more admirable than likeable." She's not kidding. Cayleff's portrayal is as brash as its subject. The author, whose adult biography *Babe: The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zaharias* (1995), earned a Pulitzer nomination, shows us a gifted, driven, and often lonely woman who polarized the press and wowed the fans as easily as she alienated teammates and competitors. Cayleff also shows the strain of being a celebrity; Zaharias constantly had to create new opportunities for herself, a burden she relieved by training and through the

exhilaration of competing in front of an audience. This is a franker depiction of Babe's life than Russell Freedman gave readers in *Babe Didrikson Zaharias* (1999), with Cayleff acknowledging (without sensationalizing) that Zaharias' relationship with fellow golfer Betty Dodd was a sexual one. Babe's witty, coarse, resourceful, and single-minded personality comes through on every page.

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## Great Read

I gave this to my boss who is an avid golfer on year. She loves it and it's a prized possession in her library.

For anyone interested in sports, especially women's sports this is required reading. The "Babe" is probably the greatest athlete this country has ever produced.

I loved reading about this gregarious and complicated athlete. This is a biography intended for young adults, but everyone will like it. Cayleff's original adult biography says she spent ten years researching Babe's life, interviewing surviving family and friends, etc., so her story is the real thing. It's also an important story, since she was the only female mentioned in the top 10 of "the greatest 20th century athletes" lists by ESPN, etc. I particularly enjoyed how Babe had a talented story-telling "changeling" quality to remake herself when she wasn't getting what she wanted. She was a physically strong "Texas tomboy" trying to make it in a time and place that liked girly-girl athletes. What struck me most was the irony that her tombstone reads "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game," yet Babe always said "I don't see any point in playing if I don't win. Do you?" She had a few different images going for her, and she used all the tricks! Get it; I'm assigning it to my community college students to learn about both women and American culture in the 30s-50s. They'll enjoy reading it while learning.

Written on a sophomoric level, this brief biography of Babe centers on the highlights of her life but ignores Babe's life-long emotional roller-coaster. After reading this book, you may think Babe enjoyed her life as an outcast and her distinctive masculine character was merely a promotion gimmick; that her 'tomboy' nature disappeared when her sexual identity was questioned. It completely ignores the many questions about her sexual ambiguity and promotes her marriage to George Zaharias as the real thing. If it was a 'for real' marriage, why did George promote constant

`out-of-town' excursions, rarely joining her, seemingly content to be separated for long time periods? This book is like a biography written about pre-AIDS Rock Hudson or Liberace. It does not examine the real Babe .... a gifted athletic ahead of her time who tried to fit in. Sports probably kept her sane. This book does not tell you who the Babe is or what she was up to; only what she achieved.

Bought as gift, so don't know.

Susan Cayleff, presents the factual information in a clear and comprehensive manner. It is unfortunate that the life of Babe, reads like a sophmoric book report.

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