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Fan fodder: What if Babe Ruth had high-tech training tools?

Posted by [Charles Cooper](#)

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Babe Ruth's idea of a workout was to wash down a meal of five hot dogs with a couple of brews-- before heading out for a night on the town. Or so I remember the story told to me in the mid-1980s by the longtime Yankee's clubhouse man, Pete Sheehy.

Pete had been working with the team since 1927 and by the time I interviewed him he had burned through a few brain cells. But his memories of "the Babe" remained fresh (probably because all of us sportswriters kept pestering him for anecdotes.)

So this much I learned about the immortal Ruth: he had loads of natural talent and trained as much as he thought he needed to--and that, of course, left him plenty of time for "R&R." You have to wonder how players like Ruth or Lou Gehrig or Hank Greenberg might have done if they had some of the high-tech training tools available to the current generation of ballplayers.

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About Coop's Corner

Charles Cooper has covered technology and bus over 25 years. A graduate of Queens College an Columbia University, Cooper began his career in journalism at the Associated Press before movin technology coverage. Over the years, he has wc Computer & Software News, Computer Shopper

Where's the technology angle in all this? Hold your horses, I'm getting there.

A PR guy for a company called ProBatter Sports contacted us Wednesday to promote a deal recently struck with the Pittsburgh Pirates to sell the club a baseball pitching simulator called the ProBatter PX2. You have to go to the company's Web site and check this thing out. (Here's a [video explainer](#).) It's a clever use of current technologies that allows batters to re-create the experience of facing a real pitcher in a controlled environment.



(Credit: ProBatter Sports)

Week, ZDNet News and now, CNET News.com. He received the Excellence in Journalism award from the

In addition to the Pirates, the company has sold its product to the New York Yankees, Boston Red Sox, Cleveland Indians, and my beloved New York Mets.

Here's how the company explains it:

"The ProBatter PX2 allows a hitter to face a DVD-quality image of a real pitcher, which is projected onto an 8x10 foot screen. The pitcher winds up (or throws from a stretch) -- at the moment of release, an actual ball is fired through a small hole in the screen, delivering virtually any pitch a human being can. Synchronization is precise and the effect is extremely realistic. Hitters can be challenged by an endless array of fastballs, sinkers, cutters, curves, sliders, change-ups, etc. -- at speeds up to 100 mph and variable in increments of two mph. Moreover, the pitches can be delivered with pinpoint accuracy and thrown to pre-selected locations inside and outside the strike zone.

No guarantees this will turn a collection of hitless wonders into the second coming of Murderers Row. But this does appear to be a clever idea that may catch on in a hurry. Batting practice is a far cry from game situations, a complaint I heard often from major leaguers--at least the ones who approached hitting as a science. But my days as a sportswriter are long over. What with everyone and their mother seemingly doing steroids these days, who knows what these guys are thinking anymore.

For the record, I still think the Babe would have preferred the hot dog and beer workout. Then again, prodigies come along once or twice in a generation.

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