

# Babe Didrikson Zaharias (1911-1956)

(CD 2 TRACK 30) ♦ [FULL TEXT 201]

## Introduction ✿

Mildred Ella “Babe” Didrikson Zaharias was an American athlete who excelled in every sport she tried. She was a track and field champion, an All-American basketball star, a record-setting golfer, and all-around force in everything from baseball to bowling. Here is a short biography of a woman who was named one of the greatest athletes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Prediction Dictation ✿

*In this activity, you are not going to listen first. Work with a partner or alone, and fill in each blank with a word you think is correct. When you are finished, listen and do the dictation on the next page. Then compare your answers.*

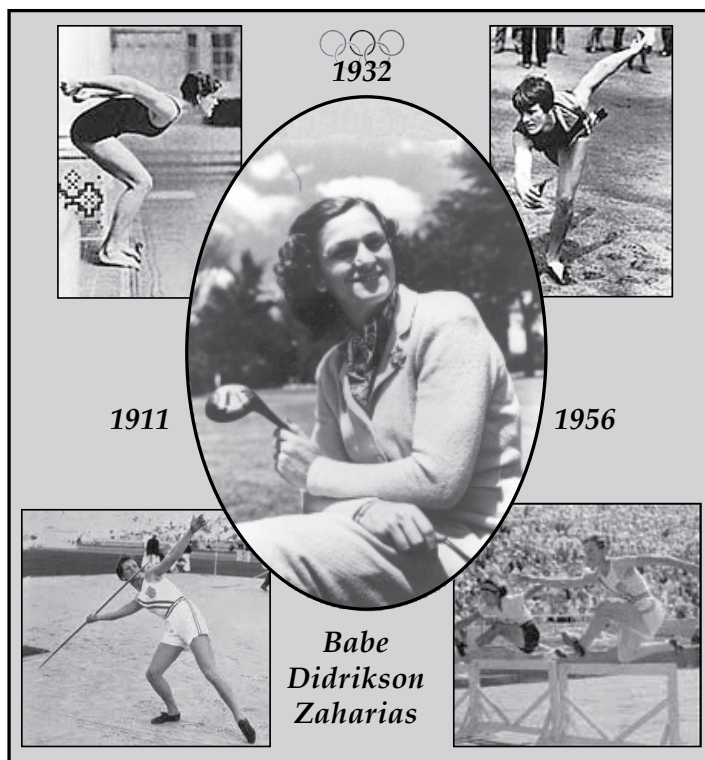
When Babe Didrikson was \_\_\_ teenager in 1925, she knew her life’s ambition. “My goal was to be the \_\_\_\_\_ athlete who ever lived,” she said.

Her parents \_\_\_\_\_ hard-working immigrants \_\_\_\_\_ Norway, and Babe grew up in a tough working-class environment that helped shape her independent \_\_\_\_\_ self-reliant spirit. A tomboy, she was strong and driven \_\_\_\_\_ assert herself. In elementary school \_\_\_\_\_ was dubbed “Babe” after Babe Ruth because of her athletic \_\_\_\_\_ on the baseball field.

In school, she dominated \_\_\_\_\_ sport she tried: volleyball, tennis, baseball, swimming, and especially basketball, which was very \_\_\_\_\_ among young women at the time. At \_\_\_\_\_ 18, she was recruited to \_\_\_\_\_ a company’s professional basketball team, where she quickly \_\_\_\_\_ the star. Soon after, she amazed audiences \_\_\_\_\_ many track and field events as well. In the 1932 Olympics she won several gold \_\_\_\_\_ for track and field.

While Babe was a natural athlete, it was \_\_\_\_\_ incredible determination that made her a champion. Her next \_\_\_\_\_ to tackle was golf, where she \_\_\_\_\_ an

unstoppable force, winning 82 tournaments \_\_\_\_\_ the 30s and 40s. She co-founded the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), a world-wide\_\_\_\_\_.



On the golf course she \_\_\_\_\_ George Zaharias, a Greek-American, in 1938. They married and Babe took and \_\_\_\_\_ her husband's name, but by then the Didrikson name \_\_\_\_\_ famous.

Didrikson was at \_\_\_\_\_ top of her career in the early 50s, and with all her tour winnings \_\_\_\_\_ endorsements, she was \_\_\_\_\_ over \$100,000 a year, an incredible \_\_\_\_\_ for a woman athlete of that time. But in 1953, she faced a major \_\_\_\_\_ she couldn't overcome – colon cancer. After the surgery, \_\_\_\_\_ said she'd be too weak to \_\_\_\_\_ sports, but four months later she was \_\_\_\_\_ in golf tournaments. And in 1954 she \_\_\_\_\_ winning again. She continued playing until 1955, when \_\_\_\_\_ the cancer returned. She held on for another year. Didrikson, arguably \_\_\_\_\_ greatest athletes of the twentieth century, \_\_\_\_\_ on September 27, 1956.

**Listening Dictation** ❁ *Listen and fill in the blanks with the words you hear. Then, with a partner, compare your prediction to the dictation.*

When Babe Didrikson was \_\_\_ teenager in 1925, she knew her life's ambition. "My goal was to be the \_\_\_\_\_ athlete who ever lived," she said.

Her parents \_\_\_\_\_ hard-working immigrants \_\_\_\_\_ Norway, and Babe grew up in a tough working-class environment that helped shape her independent \_\_\_\_\_ self-reliant spirit. A tomboy, she was strong and driven \_\_\_\_\_ assert herself. In elementary school \_\_\_\_\_ was dubbed "Babe" after Babe Ruth because of her athletic \_\_\_\_\_ on the baseball field.

In school, she dominated \_\_\_\_\_ sport she tried: volleyball, tennis, baseball, swimming, and especially basketball, which was very \_\_\_\_\_ among young women at the time. At \_\_\_\_\_ 18, she was recruited to \_\_\_\_\_ a company's professional basketball team, where she quickly \_\_\_\_\_ the star. Soon after, she amazed audiences \_\_\_\_\_ many track and field events as well. In the 1932 Olympics she won several gold \_\_\_\_\_ for track and field.

While Babe was a natural athlete, it was \_\_\_\_\_ incredible determination that made her a champion. Her next \_\_\_\_\_ to tackle was golf, where she \_\_\_\_\_ an unstoppable force, winning 82 tournaments \_\_\_\_\_ the 30s and 40s. She co-founded the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), a world-wide \_\_\_\_\_.

On the golf course she \_\_\_\_\_ George Zaharias, a Greek-American, in 1938. They married and Babe took and \_\_\_\_\_ her husband's name, but by then the Didrikson name \_\_\_\_\_ famous.

Didrikson was at \_\_\_\_\_ top of her career in the early 50s, and with all her tour winnings \_\_\_\_\_ endorsements, she was \_\_\_\_\_ over \$100,000 a year, an incredible \_\_\_\_\_ for a woman athlete of that time. But in 1953, she faced a major



\_\_\_\_\_ she couldn't overcome – colon cancer. After the surgery, \_\_\_\_\_ said she'd be too weak to \_\_\_\_\_ sports, but four months later she was \_\_\_\_\_ in golf tournaments. And in 1954 she \_\_\_\_\_ winning again. She continued playing until 1955, when \_\_\_\_\_ the cancer returned. She held on for another year. Didrikson, arguably \_\_\_\_\_ greatest athletes of the twentieth century, \_\_\_\_\_ on September 27, 1956.

### Discussion \*

*Here are some sports Babe played. Can you guess what each sport is?*

1. After she knocked down all the pins for a strike, she won the game.
2. All the fans had their eyes on the mound, waiting to see what the nervous pitcher would do.
3. She dribbled as she ran down the court.
4. She did 20 laps in the pool every day.
5. She and her friend picked up their racquets and went to the court.
6. She swung her driver, and the ball sailed in the air and landed on the green.
7. She ran down the track, leaned on her pole, and flew over the bar.
8. She liked to do three miles a day. It usually took her about 20 minutes.

### Follow up \*

*Here are some other outstanding female athletes. Choose **one** and find out more information about her. Report back to the class.*

Jackie Joyner-Kersey

Annika Sorenstam

Michelle Wie

Althea Gibson

Wilma Rudolph

Venus Williams

Michelle Kwan

Lorena Ochoa

Mia Hamm

# Babe Didrikson Zaharias

*Note to teachers:* Accept any logical or grammatically correct answers.

## Prediction Dictation ❁ page 109 (CD 2, track 30)

When Babe Didrikson was a teenager in 1925, she knew her life's ambition. "My goal was to be the greatest athlete who ever lived," she said.

Her parents were hard-working immigrants from Norway, and Babe grew up in a tough working-class environment that helped shape her independent and self-reliant spirit. A tomboy, she was strong and driven to assert herself. In elementary school she was dubbed "Babe" after Babe Ruth because of her athletic ability on the baseball field.

In school, she dominated every sport she tried: volleyball, tennis, baseball, swimming, and especially basketball, which was very popular among young women at the time. At age 18, she was recruited to join a company's professional basketball team, where she quickly became the star. Soon after, she amazed audiences in many track and field events as well. In the 1932 Olympics she won several gold medals for track and field.

While Babe was a natural athlete, it was her incredible determination that made her a champion. Her next sport to tackle was golf, where she was an unstoppable force, winning 82 tournaments in the 30s and 40s. She co-founded the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), a world-wide organization.

On the golf course she met George Zaharias, a Greek-American, in 1938. They married and Babe took and used her husband's name, but by then the Didrikson name was famous.

Didrikson was at the top of her career in the early 50s, and with all her tour winnings and endorsements, she was earning over \$100,000 a year, an incredible feat for a woman athlete of that time. But in 1953, she faced a major problem she couldn't overcome – colon cancer. After the surgery, doctors said she'd be too weak to play sports, but four months later she was back in golf tournaments. And in 1954 she started winning again. She continued playing until 1955, when unfortunately the cancer returned. She held on for another year. Didrikson, arguably one of the greatest athletes of the twentieth century, died on September 27, 1956.