

## Lesson #133

### Louisville Slugger

The Louisville Slugger story began in the mid-1880s when Bud Hillerich was a teenager. He had a job in his father's woodworking shop. Bud was also a baseball fan and played amateur baseball. He made wooden bats for himself and his teammates. According to legend, Bud was a spectator at a professional baseball game in 1884. The 17-year-old went to watch Pete Browning, a Louisville Eclipse superstar. Fans called Browning "The Gladiator." During the game, Browning broke his bat. Bud offered to make him a new bat, an idea that would change his father's shop forever. As the story goes, Browning got three hits when he used the bat in his next game. His nickname changed to "Louisville Slugger." Soon other players began to visit the Hillerich woodshop.

Bud tried to convince his father to start making baseball bats to sell. The idea did not go over well. Bud's father made and sold swinging butter churns, which were popular at the time. Bud didn't give up, however. He continued to perfect the bat-making process. He even applied for a patent on his design. A patent is a special right the government gives to an inventor. It prevents others from copying the invention.

The Louisville Slugger baseball bat was finally born in 1894. Three years later, Bud became a partner in his father's business. Honus Wagner autographed a Louisville Slugger, and sales soared out of the park. At the time, Wagner, "The Flying Dutchman," was a shortstop with the Pittsburgh Pirates. He was one of the best hitters in the league and became a Hall of Famer in 1936. When he signed the bat, it was the first time a professional athlete had promoted a piece of sporting equipment. Since then, more than 8,000 baseball players have signed contracts with the makers of the Louisville Slugger.

Today, the Louisville Slugger is the official bat of Major League Baseball. The company has made bats for players in every World Series since 1903.



The world's largest bat sits in front of the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory in Louisville, Kentucky.

Source: Mobilitus in Mobilii/CC BY-SA 2.0/Wikimedia Commons

1. Match each term with its clue.

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| _____ amateur   | A) story that is believed but not proven true                     |
| _____ patent    | B) person who takes part in an activity but is not a professional |
| _____ legend    | C) person's signature written by hand                             |
| _____ autograph | D) officially credits someone with an invention                   |

2. How did Bud Hillerich become interested in making baseball bats?

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3. Match each baseball player with his description.

- |       |  |                 |
|-------|--|-----------------|
|       | A) Pete Browning                                       | B) Honus Wagner |
| _____ | nicknamed "The Flying Dutchman"                        |                 |
| _____ | played for the Louisville Eclipse                      |                 |
| _____ | got three hits with a bat Bud Hillerich made for him   |                 |
| _____ | played for the Pittsburgh Pirates                      |                 |
| _____ | put his autograph on a Louisville Slugger baseball bat |                 |
| _____ | nicknamed "The Gladiator"                              |                 |
| _____ | a 1936 Hall of Famer                                   |                 |

4. Why didn't Bud's father want to make baseball bats in his workshop?

- A) Bats were too expensive to make.
- B) Mr. Hillerich wanted to focus on making butter churns.
- C) Mr. Hillerich didn't like baseball.
- D) Pete Browning didn't like the baseball bats.

5. The passage says, "more than 8,000 baseball players have signed contracts with the makers of the Louisville Slugger." What does this mean?

- A) These players have joined the Hillerich amateur baseball team.
- B) These are the only players who have permission to use a Hillerich bat.
- C) These players have agreed to promote the Louisville Slugger in exchange for money.
- D) all of these