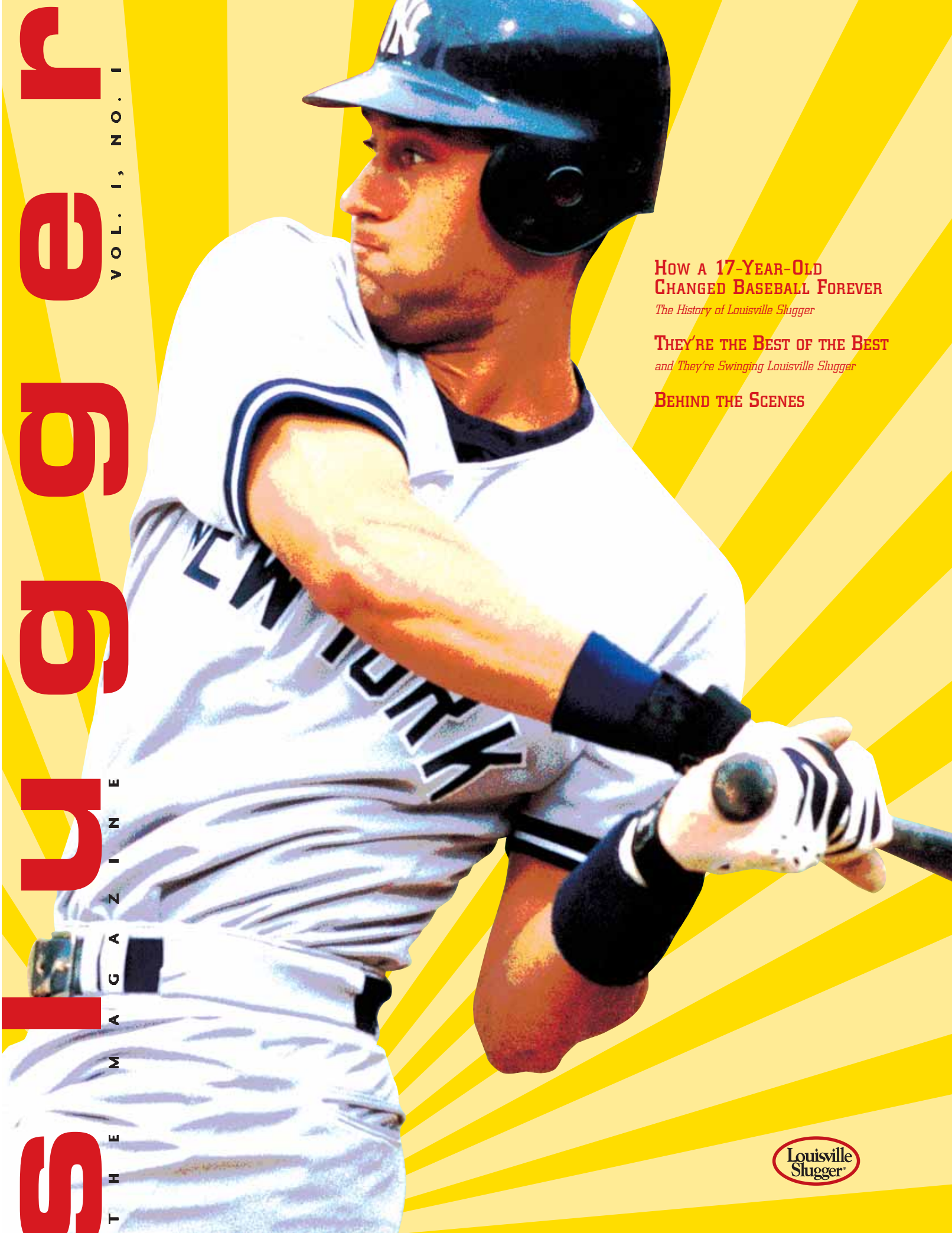


Sluggers

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THE MAGAZINE



**HOW A 17-YEAR-OLD
CHANGED BASEBALL FOREVER**

The History of Louisville Slugger

THEY'RE THE BEST OF THE BEST

and They're Swinging Louisville Slugger

BEHIND THE SCENES





F R O M L U M B E R ^{TO} L E G E N D

THE MAKING OF A MAJOR LEAGUE LOUISVILLE SLUGGER WOOD BAT

Swing a Louisville Slugger, and you're swinging a piece of timber that's been around for more than 60 years. That's how long it takes for a tree to mature into suitable lumber. In fact, you'd be surprised at how much older your wood bat is than you are. The process of making a Louisville Slugger begins with selecting the timber itself. Although maple is rapidly gaining in popularity among today's pros, the majority of bats are made from white ash. However, not just any white ash can become a Louisville Slugger. In fact, the only ash up to Louisville Slugger standards grows along a 200-mile stretch of land on the New York-Pennsylvania border. The soil, rain, sun — everything is just right there. That's where the best bats in the world, Louisville Slugger bats, come from.

LET'S SAY WE WANT TO MAKE A WOOD BAT. Where do we start? It all starts with lumber from the first 10 feet of the tree trunk. Everything else is furniture and firewood.

AT THE MILL, the trunk is cut into 40-inch "bolts," then the bolts are split into triangular wedges.

AFTER INSPECTION, the wedges are shaped into rounded pieces called "billets." Newly-cut lumber is moist and soft, so the billets are dried in a huge kiln oven. The wood is inspected again, and the best billets get shipped to Louisville, Kentucky, and stored until they're ready to be turned. That's where

the magic is — where these pieces of wood are made into the legendary bats of Louisville Slugger.

A BAT IS "TURNED" using a tool called a "lathe," which holds the billet at either end and spins it like an axle. Then it touches a sharp blade to the wood, which moves in a pre-set pattern from one end to the other. Chips of wood fly like sparks, and when it's all over, you've got a bat.

THE NEW BAT is removed from the lathe and sanded smooth as silk, then branded with a model number and the Louisville Slugger logo. If the bat is being made for a Major League player, it's branded with the number 125, indicating that it was made from the highest

quality wood — wood with a tight, straight grain and few knots or imperfections.

THE BAT IS SANDED one more time to remove any residue left by the brand, then it's dipped in lacquer or paint and hung to dry. The finish makes the wood stronger and adds a decorative touch, although some players prefer to have their bats unfinished — just pure, natural wood.

DID YOU KNOW? The first Louisville Slugger was turned way back in 1884, and the process is the same today as it was back then. But back then, everything was done by hand. Machines do it all now, so what used to take 15 minutes now takes less than 15 seconds.

