

The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

Volume 4, Number 3: "Let's get this lumpy, licorice-stained ball rolling!" August 2004
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From the Chairman Beer Gardens in the Queen City

by David Jones
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For me, the highlight of this year's Cincinnati convention was that I finally got to see what a real beer garden looks like.

I remember the first time I saw that phrase, "beer garden." I was reading J. Thomas Hetrick's book *Chris Von der Ahe and the St. Louis Browns*, when I came across the nugget that Von der Ahe had placed a beer garden in play at his ballpark in St. Louis. I loved that image, except that I had absolutely no idea what a "beer garden" was, or what it might have looked like. The word conjured vague images in my mind of old ladies patiently watering the soil and trimming bushes whose roots produced the sweet nectar of a fine pilsner, or the husky sap of an aged lager.

But thanks to the determination of our former chairman, Tom Simon, I got to visit my first beer garden during the four days I was in Cincinnati last month. Tom had become somewhat preoccupied with Garry Herrmann, the longtime owner of the Cincinnati Reds and one of the Deadball Era's great power brokers. As we all learned in John Saccoman's biography of Garry in *Deadball Stars of the National League*, Herrmann was born in Cincinnati of German ancestry and known to carry a supply of sausages with him everywhere he went. Saccoman continues that Herrmann was "noted for his generosity" and "often began dinner meetings with a single table but would add seating over the



Photo from the SABR Convention, courtesy of Paul Sallee.

course of the evening, refusing to turn people away." Clearly, if anyone would have been likely to visit a beer garden during the Deadball Era, it was "The Walking Delicatessen."

After some digging in the library, Tom came across Herrmann's home address, and so he, R.J. Lesch, and Lance Richbourg and I hopped in a taxi and headed off for the Herrmann abode, or what remained of it. As it turned out, nothing remained of it; the site of Herrmann's castle was now home to an apartment complex. But the grandeur of
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A Winning Season?
Say it ain't so, Honus!

“The Winning Season”— It’s Not about Baseball

by **Cindy Thomson**

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Many Deadball Era enthusiasts were looking forward to the TNT movie “The Winning Season.” Based on the children’s book *Honus and Me*, the movie tempted fans of the 1909 era to seek it out, expecting to see thrilling portrayals of Honus Wagner and Ty Cobb. Seekers of historical baseball drama were disappointed. Although actors did play the roles of hall-of-famers, the movie wasn’t about them. The movie had a baseball setting, but was no more about baseball than “The Field of Dreams.” While Honus Wagner (played by Matthew Modine) was a main character, Modine’s impersonation of the Flying Dutchman was not the focus. That’s a good thing, since it’s doubtful Modine could have pulled it off—but then, what actor could?

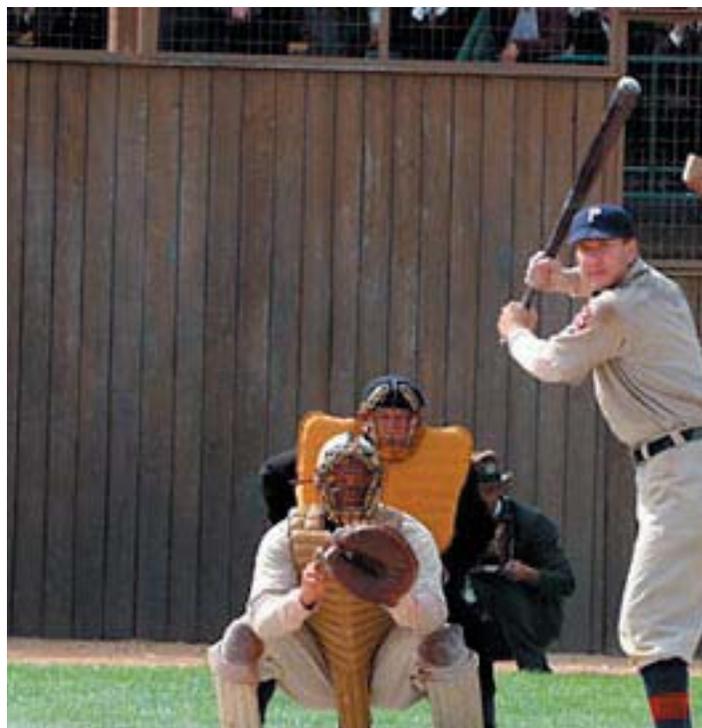
The movie was a fantasy, pure fiction, about a young boy (Joe Shosack played by William Lee Scott and Shawn Hatosy) who, upon finding a treasured Wagner T-206 in his neighbor’s garage, has a choice to make. The garage owner likely doesn’t understand the card’s value. Should he give it back or keep it? Joe’s family was struggling financially, so the temptation to steal for a good cause presented the viewer with a very realistic dilemma.

When Joe is magically transported back in time (from 1985 to 1909), he meets Honus Wagner and gets him to sign the 1910 tobacco card. Yes, Wagner is surprised by its existence; the card was not created for another year. Although Joe spouts information about baseball salaries in 1985 being higher than that of the president, and Ty Cobb making it into the not-yet-created Hall of Fame the same year as Wagner, Honus’s focus is on a major life decision he must make: the game or the girl he loves. While Wagner’s dilemma is not as convincing as Joe’s (his major concern is getting back to 1985), the famous shortstop does take time to tell the boy that there must a purpose to his time travel.

Honus is right. In the end, when Joe makes it back to 1985, Wagner’s girlfriend turns out to be the neighbor who owned the card (played by Kristin Davis of “Sex and the City”). She gets the opportunity to change a decision she had made in 1909.

The movie is for kids, and while attempts were made to be historically accurate—and accomplished, when you look at the period costumes and the recreated ballparks—mistakes were made. One of the most obvious was the vilification of Ty Cobb. Cobb was not a nice guy in 1909, but he had respect for Wagner, not hatred. Still, every piece of fiction needs a bad guy and in that setting, it’s not surprising that Cobb was chosen.

I liked the movie for its charm, morality, and appeal to children, even though it wasn’t an accurate portrayal of the men who played the game in 1909. All in all, this movie left me, and hopefully the children who watched it, pondering the question: If I had a second chance, how could I make better decisions that would positively influence others? ♦



Matthew Modine, a la Honus Wagner, takes his cuts in the made-for-TV movie, “The Winning Season.” Though Honus may have fared well at bat, the movie struck out, according to our reviewers. Note Wagnerian grip on bat.

David Wells on the Deadball Era:

In the June issue of the Mariners’ alternative program, *The Grand Salami*, David Wells responds thusly to hitters’ complaints that the ball doesn’t carry well at Petco Park:

“Stop complaining and play the game. I think it [Petco Park] makes you play the game the way the game was meant to be played. Learn to hit up the middle. Play some hit-and-run. Hitters should count their blessings. In my opinion, the Deadball Era was a beautiful thing.”

Quoted from Steve Steinberg from the Deadball Era Listserv, in an email dated June 27, 2004. Steve notes that the source of the quote is not given. ♦

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“The Winning Season” — A Losing Movie

by Mark Pattison

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It’s a shame that TNT had to pad its adaptation of a children’s book, *Honus and Me* — which probably would have been fine as one of those old hour-long ABC “Afterschool Specials” — into a two-hour movie, “The Winning Season.” And to have the nerve to show it on the first night of the new season, yet; Boston at Baltimore was much better.

I wanted to like this movie. I really did. And that’s hard for this native Detroit to admit, considering it concerns the 1909 World Series, which the Tigers lost.

In truth, baseball itself didn’t play that big a part in “The Winning Season.” That’s a blessing and a curse. Perhaps if more game action had been simulated, some of the story’s tedium would have been minimized. On the other hand, if they’re going to play Game Seven of the 1909 Series in Detroit — at Bennett Field or Bennett Park (both are used, but only the latter’s right) — it’s doesn’t make any sense for the stands to erupt in cheers, as it does in this film, when Pittsburgh’s Honus Wagner (Matthew Modine, or his stunt double) catches a pop fly for the game’s final out. I had read that the filmmakers were striving for accuracy in period detail. Perhaps they should have consulted Retrosheet.

Where the filmmakers had it more right was in depicting a down-on-its heels Pittsburgh in 1985, with economic hard times besetting the Stoshack family, which sets the story in motion. A glimpse of the back side of a 1971 Willie Stargell baseball card looks accurate enough, but card enthusiasts will remember it was the first times Topps had introduced a black-bordered card — and the card’s front side in the movie looks nothing like that. When young Joe Stoshack (Mark Rendall, in a highly believable performance) and his dad can’t afford the \$7.99 plus tax to buy the card to complete Joe’s collection (a reasonable assumption, since a full set in excellent condition goes for \$3,400 today), Joe goes to the elderly neighbor lady, Mrs. Young (Kristin Davis), to do chores to earn the money.

It’s in cleaning out her garage that Joe finds one of the famed T-206 Honus Wagner baseball cards, worth a whole lot more than \$7.99. That night, the card transports Joe to 1909 with the Pirates in the thick of the World Series. Shawn Hatosy plays the 1909-version Joe, a bit older but not grown up; think a taller Mickey Rooney.

Modine credibly plays Wagner, who doles out a good bit of simple, homespun philosophy — perhaps the best element of the film. Frankly, I’ve grown tired of the quasi-Zen junk ladled out in theatrical films from “Pocahontas” to the “Freaky Friday” remake. Wagner’s opposition to his tobacco card, though, is mischaracterized (for dramatic purposes, I’m sure).

And surprise: Ty Cobb (William Lee Scott) plays the heavy — filing his spikes in open view of the Bucs’ dugout, stealing the Wagner card and forcing Joe to “disappear” Honus so Wagner can’t play Game Seven. Cobb fans have a right to object, but it’s a surprisingly minor plot twist. Hall of Famer Sam Crawford’s also featured in the closing credits, but I must have blinked when he appeared.

“The Winning Season” is over. So is my whining season. ♦



Modine/Wagner slides into home. Is he safe? It looks like the umpire is calling him out. Our reviewers side with the ump.

Beer Garden, continued from page 1.

some of the homes surrounding the complex gave us some clue as to what Herrmann’s neighborhood must have looked like 100 years ago. However, I do imagine that the four of us were the first people to ever slowly ride past this ordinary apartment complex, thinking “Wow....this is so cool!”

After this brief little sojourn, we headed off to Mecklenburg Gardens, a genuine German restaurant and beer garden located just a few blocks from Herrmann’s address. Though it had gone out of business for awhile, Mecklenburg Gardens was originally established in 1865 and thrived during the Deadball Era. Undoubtedly, Herrmann had eaten here, and it is likely that the great Dode Paskert, another famous German Deadballer who first played in the big leagues with Cincinnati, also wet his whistle here one or two times.

For a fan of the Deadball Era, then, entering the Mecklenburg Gardens was not unlike the feeling I imagine French historians experience when they first visit Versailles. No, this sacred soil had not been shadowed by the Sun King, but it almost certainly played host to the former president of the Cincinnati Water Works Commission, as well as a slightly-above-average center fielder who was once traded for Johnny Bates. I tell you, my feet were shaking.

During that enchanted evening, Tom, R.J., Lance and I talked about many things: boxing, the Federal League, the 1911 World Series, John McGraw. Had they been there, Herrmann and Paskert could have joined in, though they probably would have become confused when the debate turned to Human Growth Hormone and the size of Mo Vaughn’s head. Such 21st century digressions notwithstanding, it was an evening to make any Deadballer smile.

So what *does* a genuine beer garden look like? I’m afraid none of us could really give you an answer to that one. By the end of the evening and after several beers, Lance had to be restrained from walking through the Cincinnati slums back to the hotel, Lesch was pacing up and down the sidewalk in front of the restaurant, trying to remember the name of some New York Giants pitcher from the 1920s, Tom was having grandiose visions of writing a book about Herrmann, and I was trying to decide if Cincinnati was a southern Northern city or a northern Southern city. After spending a few hours in one, all I can tell you about a beer garden is that it has plants and lots of alcohol, though I’m still not sure what the one has to do with the other. ♦

Ghosts in the Gallery at Cooperstown: Sixteen Little-Known Members of the Hall of Fame, by David L. Fleitz.

Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004. Price: \$29.95. Postpaid price: \$33.95. Order information: www.mcfarlandpub.com or 1-800-253-2187.

Book review by **Steve Constantelos**
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David Fleitz bashes another triple off the wall with *Ghosts in the Gallery at Cooperstown*. The gifted biographer of Joe Jackson and Lou Sockalexis strikes again with portraits of sixteen old-time Cooperstown inductees, ten of whom spent a good deal of their career in the Deadball Era. Presented in order of Hall admission, Fleitz gives us clear, elegant, and entertaining biographies of players who have never received such extended treatment before. It also discusses their Hall of Fame selections, interspersing succinct history lessons: pages 170-171 unfold the story of the Players League, and on page 152 the eccentricities of Cooperstown enshrinement are exposed in one striking example.

About three or four times longer than the bios in *Deadball Stars of the National League*, the bios in this book are a great supplement to the DEC project, expanding the players' stories before and beyond the Deadball Era and covering tidbits not found in our committee's work (while our bios have things not found in Fleitz). For instance, Fleitz tells us of "Gumshoe" **Roger Bresnahan's** employment as a hotel detective, but doesn't name Red Dooin as one of the inspirers of Bresnahan's more famous shin guards, and lacks the quotations on his relationship with Helene Britton. Until we actually go source-by-source, compiling all mentions of all the players (Just how many fights was The Duke of Tralee a party to anyway? Was it more or less than Dan McGann? And what about Buck Herzog?), this is the best kind of material we will have. The BioProject committee is, of course, ably addressing this issue as well.

In these well-researched bios, we get the expected and unexpected all wrapped in one. **Morgan Bulkeley**, "Crowbar Governor" of CT and member

of the Senate and Spalding's Mills Commission; curver **Candy Cummings**; spitting **Jack Chesbro**; the mellowing of **Jesse Burkett**; SPEBSQSA member **Kid Nichols**; **Bobby Wallace's** pitching style (!) and fielding prowess; **John Clarkson** and **Jake Beckley**, traitors to the Players League cause; **Elmer Flick's** home run champ cup and touching reaction to his Hall admission; **Eppa Rixey's** home runs; a tribute to **Roger Connor**, the adored Giant slugger who perfected the "come-up" (pop-up) slide; **Vic Willis's** post-baseball life; **Willie Wells** in and on Mexico; **Frank Selee** building his Cubs; and the legendary **Bid McPhee** hired as Cincinnati manager to unwittingly serve as a pleasant front to owner John "Tooth" Brush, who was less concerned with stocking the Reds with good players than making sure Christy Mathewson was pitching for the Giants, who Brush was working on purchasing.

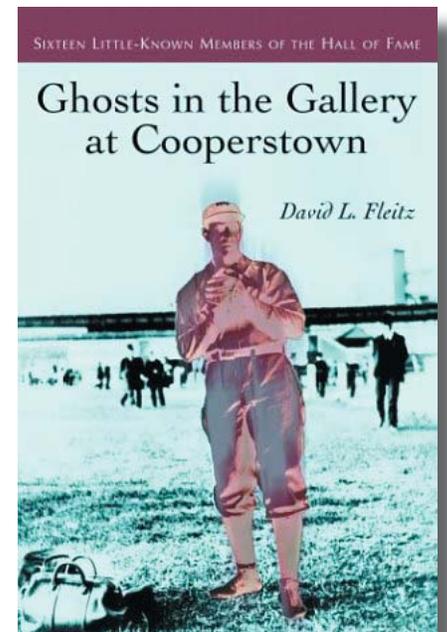
Details on pitcher deliveries seem to be Fleitz's specialty, peaking with my pick of the litter, his work on Candy Cummings. Fleitz details how Candy developed as a pitcher and early diamond star, addressing the controversy of who was the first curveballer evenhandedly (as the author does with all such issues throughout the book). This is capped with Cummings telling us how he would pitch to Babe Ruth. This bio and those of Roger Connor were perhaps the most fascinating to me, partly because I was not as familiar with them as I was with most of the other subjects, and because Fleitz seems to capture their exploits and personas so well, to have an affection for them.

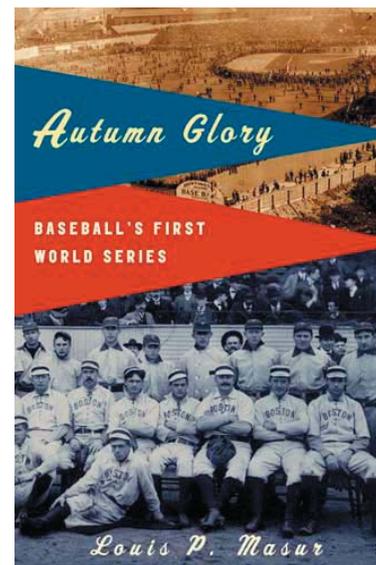
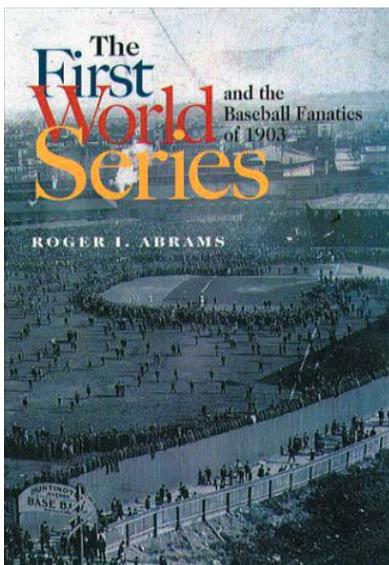
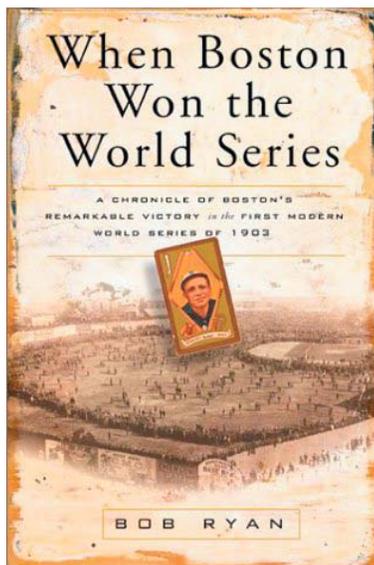
The underlying thread of the book is the history of the Hall of Fame and its selection process. At the close of each bio, Fleitz analyzes each member's credentials, how he came to be elected, in nearly every case giving a spot on summary and conclusion of why this person ascended to Cooperstown. What do we learn about Bobby Wallace in a typical baseball history book? That he was a shortstop, a Brown (maybe a Spider), was popular, a good fielder, and is a marginal Hall of Famer—not much else. But after reading Fleitz we understand better why Bobby Wallace was one of the highest-paid players of his time (for a time), was sought after in trades (by Pittsburgh owner Barney Dreyfuss of all people), and is a solid Hall of Famer, the Ozzie Smith of his time, if we must compare him to someone.

The book's only real weakness is in the statistical analysis Fleitz uses to evaluate some of the Hall's selections. Stats like "number of games over .500" to rate pitchers and such hold little water today. (Heck, the idea of valuing pitcher wins and losses has lost hold in most stats circles). Given that the sorts of stats that Fleitz usually discusses are the ones that likely influenced the Hall of Fame voters, though, his discussions can be viewed as historical baseball analysis, and not a flaw. If it is still a sticking point for some, it is a small problem, easily solved via many other sources. We're not reading the book for stat analysis anyway.

Ghosts in the Gallery is a real gem for those interested in ballplayer bios. It has the feel of a small book, not a monumental history or groundbreaking polemic, but a valuable book nonetheless. It's a well-written, well-edited book to boot. If you still thirst for player bios after reading *Deadball Stars of the National League*, and if you're interested in a few of these subjects, be sure to pick it up—you'll soon find that you're interested in everyone featured. And it never hurts for a dyed-in-the-wool Deadballer to be better acquainted with the nineteenth-century forebears of the era, nor the trials and triumphs of the Negro Leaguers.

A second such volume from Fleitz would be most welcome. ♦





Ryan, Bob. *When Boston Won the World Series: A Chronicle of Boston's Remarkable Victory in the First Modern World Series of 1903*. Philadelphia, PA: The Running Press, 2003.

Abrams, Roger I. *The First World Series and the Baseball Fanatics of 1903*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2003.

Masur, Louis P. *Autumn Glory: Baseball's First World Series*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2003.

Book reviews by **Mike Foster**
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Marking the centennial anniversary of peace between the National and American Leagues and the playing of the first AL-NL championship series, Bob Ryan, Roger Abrams, and Louis Masur produced three decidedly different versions of the complex events that culminated with Boston's five games to three victory over Pittsburgh on the 13th of October, 1903.

An ESPN regular and veteran sportswriter with over 15 years at the *Boston Globe*, Bob Ryan is no stranger to the rough and tumble world of Boston sports reporting. As the title suggests, *When Boston Won the World Series* chronicles the summer of 1903 largely from the vantage point of the Huntington Avenue Baseball Grounds, and, specifically, from the press seat occupied by then *Globe* sportswriter, Tim Murnane. Largely through the words of Murnane, Ryan spins a fast-paced story that begins

with an invitation to readers to turn back the clock one hundred years, to the days of Collins and Young, Criger and Ferris, and to join him as the Boston Americans leave spring training behind and race off into the summer. By page 61 we learn that Boston has clinched the pennant, and 4 pages later Collins' Americans come to terms and a championship series is set. Outside a few biographical diversions, from there on out it is all World Series, the eight games comprising more than half of the book's 174 generously paginated and heavily illustrated pages. For those new to the era (not to mention Red Sox fans eager for an easy-to-read account of a year the Boston Americans actually *didn't* self-destruct in October) *When Boston Won the World Series* makes for a fun read, and Ryan – unsurprising given his profession – can certainly turn a phrase. (“Welcome to the 1903 world of major league baseball,” he surmises at one point. “It was a rough game whose system of justice was equal parts Old Testament, King Arthur’s Court and Dodge City.”) Nevertheless, for those searching for a more richly textured history, the book is disappointingly light on research (five books, clippings from the *Globe* Library, and a few items from the Hall of Fame), and Ryan’s decision to build his entire story around one correspondent blithely bypasses the rich bounty of writings produced by rival Boston papers. The author’s habit of sprinkling his historical narrative with early 21st century references gets annoying after Chapter One, and his occasional butchery of Deadball Era history, at times, left this reader scratching

his scalp. The game in 1903 is “basically the same” as today? John I. Taylor the father of Boston’s championship teams of 1915, 1916 and 1918? The New York Giants “shut out” by Philadelphia “in each and every game” of the 1905 World Series? Say it ain’t so, Bob!

For a more rigorously researched alternative, I turned to Roger Abram’s *The First World Series and the Baseball Fanatics of 1903*. A former salary arbitrator, noted author in sports law and faculty member of Northeastern University Law School, the author comes to this story with no shortage of credentials. Like Bob Ryan, Abrams is most intrigued by the Boston side of the story, and he does a serviceable job of amassing an impressive bibliography of primary and secondary sources. But, beyond that, *The First World Series and the Baseball Fanatics of 1903* falls woefully flat. At one level, it is the thesis itself that is problematic. Abram’s chief aim in this “vivid and lively account” (as the inside sleeve has it) is to demonstrate how the World Series of 1903 “provides a unique lens to view American life,” while affirming “how the post-season play gave disparate classes in society – Brahmins, industrialists, Irish politicians, Jewish Immigrants – the rare opportunity to join in common support of their local teams and heroes.” As Abrams describes it, baseball generally (and the 1903 World Series in particular) was a unifying force in America, drawing citizens together in a manner that nothing (outside of war) had in the past. But the

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World Series, cont. from page 5.

notion – that baseball somehow bridged deeply entrenched barriers of ethnicity, creed and class – simply asks too much. Was the 1903 World Series a reflection of the American past? No question. Was it an agent of cultural change? That notion is difficult to accept and nearly impossible to prove. After all, while “Brahmin” John I. Taylor and a hardworking bleacherite may have both exited the Huntington Avenue Grounds wearing broad smiles on the afternoon of October the 13th, who can say that their worlds were any closer then they had been when the summer of 1903 got underway?

But beyond the question of his central thesis, *The First World Series and the Baseball Fanatics of 1903* fails insofar as it routinely betrays its very subject. In a textbook-like narrative that randomly lumps together an array of historical minutia – from snowball fights on the Boston Common to Irish potato famine to the Catholic Church in Boston – the 1903 World Series, its players, executives, and the baseball “fanatics” so central to the story are, at times, completely lost. The eight contests (some of which were absolute thrillers) are presented in an arbitrary fashion, and action on the field is glossed over far too quickly. Worse still, for all the discussion of ethnic and class tensions outside of baseball, Abrams makes virtually no effort to explore the issue inside either baseball organization. While Abram’s historical claims are, by and large, accurate (or at least worthy of further debate), his delivery, regrettably, misses the plate by a country mile.

Easily most captivating of the three books was the final volume on my list, Louis Masur’s *Autumn Glory*. Masur’s crafty approach to the “single season” theme is as innovative as it is well-researched. In 16 chapters spanning 226 pages, Masur seamlessly frames the story of the birth of the modern Majors around each of the eight contests played that October. The complex history of the rise of the American League, the wars, the peace and summer of 1903, is retold with grace and precision, and each game recreated with meticulous care. His bibliography (which includes a priceless diary passage culled from the Marian Lawrence Peabody Papers housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society) is splendid, and the play-by-play retelling of the eight game series puts the reader squarely into a grandstand seat on

Huntington Avenue (and, alternatively, Exposition Park). The Rooters, Hans Wagner, Cy Young – Masur brings them all to life in a vivid and heart-pounding narrative who’s only shortcoming is that it ends far too soon.

So, there it is. If you haven’t done it already, be sure to put in your order for *Autumn Glory*, and, hey, while you’re at it, you might as well pick up the others as well. If nothing else, it will give you plenty of reading while you wait for the *fourth* book on the subject – Andy Babilis and Nick Tziotos’ *The 1903 World Series* – due out this summer at a bookseller near you. ♦

A Biographical Dictionary of Major League Baseball Managers,
John C. Skipper

Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003. Order information: www.mcfarlandpub.com or 1-800-253-2187.

Book review by **Mark Dugo**
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When one considers writing a book to encapsulate every manager in major league history one would be correct to assume that it would be a daunting task. How does Skipper pull it off...in fewer than 400 pages, no less? Simply by allowing legends such as Connie Mack less than two full pages of introduction into his amazing accomplishments and John McGraw less than three pages.

Thumbing through the book prior to stopping and reading lets you know immediately that if you have even the slightest familiarity with many of the managers profiled that you will not be learning anything new between the pages of this biographical dictionary. The word “dictionary” is appropriately used because this book simply provides the briefest thumbnail sketch of a manager and his accomplishments without giving anything other than the most commonly recognized facts mixed amongst Skipper’s opinions.

In detailing Mack’s career, Skipper generalizes that Mack made little use of his bench--with stars Foxx, Simmons, Collins and Cochrane among other Hall of Fame playing regularly--who would fault Mack? He also avers that Mack ignored the fundamentals of the game such as intentional walks, sacrifice bunts, and the use of pinch hitters.

McGraw is afforded three pages for his career from 1905 through 1932 and is summarized in two brief paragraphs. In referring to the legendary career of Mel Ott, Skipper praises McGraw for his ability to take youngsters under his wing and nurture them until they were ready. “The greatest example is Mel Ott, who sat on the bench as a 17 year old, played occasionally the next few years, and then took over in right field when Ross Youngs came down with what turned out to be a fatal illness.” I’m not so sure that speaks of McGraw’s ability to assess talent. Ott’s talent was clearly evident, but he had a need to fill due to Young’s unfortunate plight. Also, how many players did McGraw “nurture,” whom he shipped out the next year after repeated failure?

As you can see by the two above examples, using this book for research other than maybe a complete listing of managerial records year from year would not benefit even the most novice SABR student. The book also suffers somewhat by listing the managers alphabetically. This may make more sense to a book publisher, but I would think the book would hold much more value to the student of baseball by listing each manager by year from first to last starting with his first year as manager. One would be able to easily identify that manager’s contemporaries and his success amongst others that he frequently competed against within their own particular era, Deadball included.

Appendix C details the Chronological Roster of Managers and offers the best opportunity to identify Deadball managers. If you weren’t sure who managed the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1909, you are able to determine that it was Fred Clarke by finding the Pirates listing and noting that Clarke was the Pirates manager from 1900-1915. Then by backtracking to Clarke’s individual page, you will see that Clarke’s Pirate teams won four pennants in the first decade of the 20th century and finished with a better than .500 record for 14 consecutive seasons. The remaining information provided besides won-loss records is again a brief biography.

The book is presented in an easy-to-read format and seems factual and concise. Skipper is to be commended for attempting to adequately cover such an overwhelming topic. As an addition to the general reader’s bookshelf, the book may succeed. ♦