

## Society for American Baseball Research

### BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

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## Comments from the Chair

**Andy McCue**

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I'd like to thank Jim Lannen for stepping forward to be our "editor" for the content management system at the SABR Web site. Jim completed his training before the holidays and only the dilatory nature of your Chair has prevented further progress.

Jim and I will be discussing the order in which we will work on posting old newsletters, the Committee's Research Guides, old book reviews, and other material. If any of you have ideas on what Bibliography Committee material you'd like to see on the Web site, then please contact me. Rich Arpi has provided the annual summaries for *Current Baseball Publications* for the last couple of years and they will be going up.

I forgot to mention in our last issue that Joe Murphy had completed updating the index to SABR publications. Joe has prepared these updates for nearly a decade now, listing all the articles ever included in a SABR publication. It's available from SABR headquarters in Cleveland; also at: <http://www.sabr.org/sabr.cfm?a=cms,c,344,36,0>.

And, inspired by my appeal in the last newsletter, Trey Strecker completed his index to *Touching Second: the Science of Baseball* by John J. Evers & Hugh S. Fullerton (1910); it is available through Len Levin's Research Library. To my disappointment, no other member came forward with a proposal to index another baseball book that was published without one; I'm hoping some of you will be inspired. However, Skip McAfee, on behalf of the Bibliography Committee, prepared the index to Jerrold Casways's *Ed Delahanty in the Emerald Age of Baseball*, to be published later this year by the Univ. of Notre Dame Press.

In The Baseball Index (TBI) world, Michael Mott, one of Jules Tygiel's graduate students at San Francisco State Univ., has been making a good deal of progress adding to the database items from the "Caught on the Fly" columns in *The Sporting News*. SABR Board member Dan Ginsburg generously donated \$2000 to SABR so we can test the practicality of adding these items. Many are no longer than a sentence, but some contain invaluable notes that can help the historian. Mike is working on 1892 columns and we're hoping his progress justifies further investment in this effort.

Now that TBI is fully online and searchable, and both Ted Hathaway and I have made considerable progress catching up with the data entry backlog, I thought it would be interesting to return to a statistical look at where TBI stands.

As of Jan. 1, TBI contained 201,079 entries. The last time we were able to record the number, in Oct. 2001, there were 173,501 entries.

The database contains 159,126 articles, 21,950 book chapters and sections, 17,887 books and pamphlets, and 2,116 others (video and audio recordings, artworks).

Of those, 175,168 (or 87%) are at level 5, which is fully catalogued. Another 8,212 are at level 4, which means examined but not thoroughly read. Level 3, where we have incomplete information on the basics, has 258 items, and level 2, which is information from a

different edition of something (such as the paperback version of a hardbound book, or a reprinted article), contains 1,322 entries. There remain 16,119 items at level 1, where we have heard or read that something exists, but haven't been able to find a copy.

Here is a list of everyone who has contributed 1000 or more entries. I should mention that each entry was typed in by hand, and some were typed after another individual copied information by hand.

Brad Sullivan	66,916
Tim Cashion	38,208
Ted Hathaway	34,118
Joe Murphy	13,094
Andy McCue	9,842
Anton Grobani	6,097
Bernie Esser	5,570
Terry Sloope	4,687
Terry Smith	3,269
Steve Milman	1,699
Bob Timmermann	1,429
Bob Boynton	1,402

If anybody would like to join this exceptionally clean dozen, Ted and I would love to have you as volunteers.

Waiting impatiently for spring training.

## The Baseball Index (TBI) Fourth Quarter (2003) Report

**Ted Hathaway**

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TBI recently reached another milestone, passing the mark of 200,000 cited resources for baseball research [201,079 as of Jan. 1]. Thanks go to **Joe Murphy** and **Terry Smith** for their continued "two-pronged" attack on *Baseball Magazine*: Terry working on the 1910s and Joe on the 1920s issues. Joe also added hundreds of entries from the 1970-1971 issues of *Baseball Digest*. **Brad Sullivan** has continued his work on *The Sporting News* and *Newsweek*, adding a few thousand new entries from the 1960s. Brad's work on the database is, as always, indispensable. Thanks to **Steve Milman**, **Bruce Roth**, **Joel Dinda**, and **Maxwell Kates** for other recent contributions. TBI's Web site has enjoyed good and steady use since it was launched in June of last year, averaging around 5000 visitors each month.

Since the TBI project began in the early 1990s, it had always been our hope that it might be a money-maker for SABR, or at least generate enough funds to further the project. Yet, despite thousands of visitors every month, low prices, and easy ways to buy data, purchases have been few and far between. Revenue generation is negligible.

We don't believe this in any way reflects on the usefulness of TBI or its relevance among baseball research tools. Indeed, the continu-

ing popularity of the Web site demonstrates its value to researchers. But providing access to TBI has always been our principal interest and goal for the project.

Viewing the potential for increasing the usefulness of TBI and its meager numbers as a revenue source, **we are soon going to begin providing free access to the data for all**. This would not only likely result in much greater usage, but would also free up valuable volunteer time which would be better devoted to building and promoting the database.

We hope this does not come as a disappointment, but that it be viewed as an opportunity to extend the scope of the TBI service and bring its riches to many more people than we could have done otherwise. We anticipate free access to begin some time in January or February. An announcement will be made on SABR-L.

TBI's Web site: <http://www.baseballindex.org>

TBI data entry site: <http://www.baseballindex.org/tbi.asp?a=frm>

## Media Review

**Ted Hathaway**

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### PAPER OF RECORD

Paper of Record, the digital home of *The Sporting News (TSN)* archives, teamed up with SABR to allow SABR members to enjoy a discount on an annual subscription to the entire published full-page, full-text archives of *TSN*. It is fully searchable on Cold North Wind's Web site ([www.paperofrecord.com](http://www.paperofrecord.com)).

I had heard about this in May 2003 at the North American Society for Sport History convention in Columbus. Jim Meier, formerly of *TSN*, had told me about it. He was pretty excited, but as soon as I learned that they were digitizing from the existing *TSN* microfilm, I knew there would be problems. In my work, I search digitized collections all the time, and I've worked with a lot of different kinds. There are some companies out there that are definitely doing it the right way.

As many of you have seen from SABR's trial subscription to the ProQuest Historical Newspapers products, they did a bang-up job on *The New York Times*. They evidently got their hands on a really high-quality microfilm copy and not only did an excellent job of digitizing the text, but also made browsable image maps of each page, allowing the reader to zero in on the individual articles and print them separately, as well as the entire page. The quality is excellent. For example, for my father's 75th birthday, I downloaded the images of each page of the paper from the day he was born, and enlarged them to near newspaper size. The print was absolutely crisp. Searching is fairly robust and generally quite accurate.

As for magazines, JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>) has done an equally superb job. This is a non-profit cooperative venture involving hundreds of academic institutions and special libraries to create a huge digital archive of scholarly journals, mostly from throughout the 20th century. It consists of long runs of academic publications, both prominent and obscure. Each issue is carefully broken down into the individual articles and includes the front matter as well. This latter part is particularly important to academics and the legal profession as it supplies the standard proof on origin. Picky, yes, but done right.

There are several other companies and projects out there involved in current and retrospective digitization. A well-known one is the "Making of America" project (Cornell Univ. and Univ. of Michigan). This has been going on for years and has covered thousands of magazines and books. They have only worked with original materials. While searching can be somewhat difficult, the quality is good and easy to read.

With Paper of Record, I've run several searches and the results were predictable. The 1886 images were just as crappy as the 1886 film, with lots of blacked-out, smudged, taped-over, even cutout sec-

tions. You get the whole page in the search results, not the individual articles or columns, so reading it online is very difficult if not impossible. Even if you enlarge it online, the image quality begins to deteriorate pretty quickly. You can try printing it out, but I find I still probably need a magnifying glass. This was a major problem whether you were looking at the 1886 edition or the 1938 edition. Mind you, in my indexing work on TBI, I've long since become used to reading the tiny type from 7- or 8-column 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers. This problem doesn't get any better until *TSN* switched to a tabloid format in the 1940s.

Searching is largely useless unless your term is unique. Despite what it says in "advanced search", it doesn't appear to search for exact phrases. I tried looking for "Frank Larkin" (the drunk who tried to kill his wife in 1883, then somehow got back into the game a few years later), but all I got were pages that had the words "Frank" or "Larkin" on them. I also noticed that accuracy is a problem. As a help, the term(s) you are searching for are highlighted in yellow in the search results. While searching through another newspaper, I tried searching for "baseball" and found the word "household" highlighted in the search results instead. Also, of course, pictures are pretty much lost—grey and black smudges for the most part—because they're working from poor-quality microfilm.

Microfilm was a stop-gap solution to the problems of storage and space that have plagued libraries for many years. It works best for journals with regular-size text containing no pictures or illustrations. It works least for newspapers and illustrated magazines. A few years ago, the writer and critic Nicholson Baker wrote a polemic ("Double Fold") attacking the way some major libraries have systematically mistreated their collections. I'm not a fan of Baker, whom I consider a strident fanatic, but he really hit the nail on the head when he pointed out that microfilm does NOT replace the original and that originals must be kept and/or preserved. Digitization, done the *right* way, can replace the originals. Digitizing from microfilm not only perpetuates its shortcomings, it compounds them because the viewing medium (a computer screen) is a lot smaller than a microfilm-reader's screen.

What we have here is obviously better than nothing, and I certainly use it now and then, but I find myself still going to the microfilm for printing because the quality is better. What I really fear is that this may be the end of the road for digitizing *TSN*. For many years we had this old crappy microfilm set to work with, where the pre-1916 prints were almost useless. Then the Univ. of Notre Dame came along with the much improved set. An improvement, yes, although even with their set the early years are often marred. Now we have Cold North Wind's effort (i.e., Paper of Record) and we might have to settle for it. Who knows when or if anyone else will try again, doing it the right way with the originals? Paper of Record is the wrong way.

## Book Reviews

**Leverett T. (Terry) Smith**

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### **LATE INNINGS; A Documentary History of Baseball, 1945-1972**

Dean A. Sullivan, comp. & ed. Lincoln (Neb.): University of Nebraska Press, 2002. 299p. ISBN 0-8032-9285-6.

*Late Innings* is the third in a series of "documentary histories"; the first two—*Early Innings* (1995) and *Middle Innings* (1998)—dealt with 1825-1908 and 1900-1948, respectively. *Late Innings* presents many diverse documents in a highly readable manner. Thus it's both useful as a reference and enjoyable to read. The game on the field is just one of many focuses.

The documents of *Late Innings* are arranged in chronological order, but the book is also divided into eight chapters, each with the-

matic emphases as indicated by their titles. The first, "Baseball in the Post-Landis Era", deals with the office of the Commissioner, the various dimensions of Jackie Robinson's arrival in the majors, and the evidence of strained relations between owners and players (though no document represents Robert Murphy and the American Baseball Guild). Three of the 14 documents focus directly on the game on the field.

Chapter 2, "Controversies over Antitrust, Airwaves", contains documents on these and the earlier themes. In addition, there is an article on Allan Roth, another on the bonus rule, and a third on the move of the Braves to Milwaukee. Five of the 18 documents deal directly with the game on the field.

The next two chapters, "Baseball Moves West" and "Continental Divides", set the stage for the expansion era, featuring documents about the move west of the Giants and the Dodgers and the formation of the Continental League. These also contain the first two of three reviews of baseball books: Charles Einstein's *The Fireside Book of Baseball* (1956) and Harold Seymour's *Baseball: The Early Years* (1960). Only seven of 32 documents in these chapters deal directly with the game on the field.

Chapter 5, entitled "Legislating Baseball", draws together documents on such disparate matters as Congressional investigations, the awarding of expansion franchises, Frick's ruling on Roger Maris' bid to break Babe Ruth's single-season home run record, and the restoration of the powers of the Commissioner. In this chapter, seven of the 16 documents concern the game on the field. As a contrast, the next chapter, "Baseball Confronts Modernity", appears to have only three of 13. Here the main focus is on documents concerning the executive director position of the Major League Baseball Players Association and the signing of the first Basic Agreement. Nothing, though, documents the hiring of Marvin Miller. It includes a review of Lawrence Ritter's *The Glory of Their Times* (1966).

Chapter 7, entitled "The Era of Labor Unrest Begins", documents the firing of umpires Al Salerno and Bill Valentine, the National Labor relations Board ruling that baseball is subject to its rulings, and the Flood antitrust suit. The last chapter ("Counting Numbers, Dollars, and Rights") begins with fantasy baseball and a story on the "statistics revolution" and ends with commentary on the Flood decision. Only five of the final 21 documents deal directly with the game on the field.

*Late Innings*, though, is more than a collection of documents; it's a documentary *history*. Sullivan provides a two-tiered narrative structure for the documents he presents. The chapter titles provide the first, and each is followed by a narrative introduction of a page or so. Secondly, each of the documents is preceded by an introductory comment that, on occasion, points toward further recommended reading. There is a bibliographic essay, an index, and 12 pages of photographs.

What sort of baseball history does Sullivan construct? He clearly sees baseball history as institutional history. He is interested primarily in how the game has developed as a business and how the business and rules changes have affected the way the game is played. The focus is on the business, rather than on an account of the game on the field; thus, it contrasts with a book such as Charles C. Alexander's *Breaking the Slump* (2002), another very good history, which focuses on the game on the field without ignoring the business. By my count, only 30 of the 114 documents in Sullivan's book deal directly with the game on the field.

One final note about the three volumes. The dates of the first are 1825-1908, the second 1900-1948, the third 1945-1972. In each case there is a significant time period covered twice. This serves to entwine the volumes and make them a continuous history. We should expect another volume--titled *Extra Innings* perhaps? If so, it will be interesting to see what Mr. Sullivan will do for titles after that.

### **CLOSE SHAVE; The Life and Times of Baseball's Sal Maglie**

James D. Szalontai. Jefferson (N.C.): McFarland, 2002. 408p. ISBN 0-7864-1189-9. \$29.95 (softcover)

I never dreamed I'd see a biography of Sal Maglie, but here one is, more than 400 pages, complete with notes, bibliography, and index. In addition, there are some 20 photographs scattered through the book, the last a sad picture of Maglie in 1969, when he served as pitching coach of the Seattle Pilots. My favorite is one of Jackie Robinson, Maglie, and Carl Furillo all looking happy together in Dodger uniforms. Maglie has always been one of my favorite ball-players, but I hadn't expected a biography, especially one this long. Why so much ado about Sal?

Szalontai explains his purposes in writing the book in the preface: Maglie as "a feared, hated, and respected craftsman of pitching who symbolized the rough era in which he played" (p.1). "The foundation of this [book]," Szalontai continues, "consists of a game-by-game analysis of Maglie's professional career which was compiled using the newspapers of the day" (p.2). The book is about more than Maglie; it is "also an examination of the teams and players he played with and against" (p.2). Finally, Maglie is the symbol of a whole era of baseball, during which it was "a violent, dangerous, and manipulative sport". Szalontai wants to deal with the "unsavory aspects" of the national pastime: "This 'golden age' of baseball was replete with intense rivalries that cultivated 'beanball' wars, fights, riots, and memorable arguments" (p.2).

Szalontai covers Maglie's pitching career thoroughly. Each of the games in which Maglie pitched is covered. More importantly, we get a sense of Maglie the person, of his development as a pitcher, and his understanding of the craft of pitching. Most interesting to me were Szalontai's accounts of Maglie's Cuban and Mexican adventures and his apprenticeship to Dolf Luque (p.51, 58, 63, 67, 80). Szalontai characterizes Maglie as "agreeable and pleasant" off the field and "angry, crude, and dangerous" on it (p.240).

As to his understanding of the craft of pitching, Maglie was known as "The Barber", called so, it would appear, because of his penchant for aiming his fastball at batters' chins or at their heads (see p.100 for Szalontai's discussion of the origins of this nickname). According to Szalontai, Maglie "transformed the art of pitching into an act of terror" (p.91). In pitching, he relied on "intimidation, pinpoint control, and a great curveball" (p.261). Perhaps Maglie's best summary of the way he pitched came in response to Jackie Robinson's complaint that Maglie was trying to hit him. Said Maglie (p.130-131): "Look, let's get this straight once and for all. I pitch like this: throw 'em high inside and low outside. I got to figure that every guy up there batting is trying to belt my brains out. So I pitch him tight, he can't get set. He has to stay loose, can't get that toe hold on the ball. Then when I come back with the low, breaking stuff on the outside, he really has to reach for it. That's the only way to pitch and win." Szalontai concludes that Sal the Barber "was not an anachronism; he played at precisely the right time in history" (p.370).

And this is why the book is of interest to those other than the small band who make up the Sal Maglie Fan Club. The book gives us a prolonged look at the dark underside of major-league baseball between World War II and expansion, a time we are all too often tempted to idealize. Although for the most part Szalontai concentrates on the game on the field, he does comment on the important off-the-field changes in the game, underlining the owners' "ironfist domination over the game" (p.228). As one consequence, the game on the field was violent and dangerous (p.2).

Szalontai sets the scene early in the book with the story of a game in, I believe, 1939 when Montreal first baseman Gene Hasson was beated by Buffalo pitcher Raymond Roche. Szalontai uses this incident to underline "the threat of death on the diamond", as Hasson "had a severed fracture of the skull and for two days lay in the hospital in critical condition before showing improvement" (p.14). For Szalontai, the beanball is the defining moment of major-league baseball in the 1950s.

Szalontai suggests two other sources for the prominence of beanballs besides the owners' "ironfist domination": 1) "the escalation of the home run ball" and 2) race. Szalontai writes: "Since Jackie Rob-

inson 'integrated' baseball, the throwing of beanballs, which was already a frequent occurrence, rose significantly" (p.86). He notes (p.294): "In an eleven-year major league career Robinson was hit a staggering 72 times, including a career high 14 times in 1952. These numbers are truly high when you consider that no one eluded a pitched ball better than Jackie Robinson." Szalontai underlines that such behavior is not confined to Giants-Dodgers games, or even to the National League, by including stories of the Milwaukee Braves (p.340), Don Zimmer (p.285), the Cleveland Indians (p.274), and Minnie Minoso (p.355). He writes (p.255): "Batters were being hit over 200 times a season on average during the 1950s, a staggering increase from prewar figures that hovered around 130." Of course these figures don't necessarily mean anything; Maglie, according to Szalontai (p.359), hit 44 batters in his career, a total that doesn't seem especially high. It was the possibility of beaning that helped make him a successful major-league pitcher. And the kind of menace he presented to batters is illustrative of an era in which, as Szalontai's research shows and as he describes the Giants-Dodgers rivalry, was characterized by "umpire baiting, beanballs, and long balls" (p.237).

Unfortunately, the book is a difficult read. Thoroughly researched, it is neither well written nor well edited. Here are some sentences that could use revision:

"People dressed nicely, particularly women because the league took place during the winter." (p.66)

"The stadium at the base of a bluff with a lot of high ground that looked down on the park and which made this tragedy possible." (p.96).

"They out-hit the added Phillies but stranded twelve baserunners." (p.127).

There are enough incomprehensible sentences and grammatical and typographical errors in the book to make the most enthusiastic reader gloomy. Szalontai clearly needed more editorial and proof-reading help than he got.

A second difficulty is rhetorical rather than mechanical. The book seemed both unfocused and repetitive. Its lack of focus may come from Szalontai's determination to examine "the teams and players [Maglie] played with and against". Much of this information seems unrelated to the book's focus. The excellent anecdote of the hit batsman in the Montreal-Buffalo game is a good example of this. The anecdote itself sets the tone of the book, but we learn much more (too much, in my opinion) about Buffalo, including the dimensions of the stadium and a list of Buffalo players who made the majors (p.8, 22). Szalontai's determination to examine each of Maglie's appearances results inevitably in repetitiveness, and there are other kinds of repetitiveness that needed to be edited out; for instance, we learn (p.91) that "the hitter's first reflex is to move backward on an inside pitch and if the ball is behind him it can result in a 'serious skulling'." Just two pages later, the following sentence occurs: "On such a pitch the batter's first reaction is to move backward, which results in a life-threatening act if the ball is behind him."

These difficulties should have been resolved before the book was published. Szalontai is clearly an enthusiastic researcher with a good story to tell. But McFarland has to take responsibility with him for the difficulties here. We are all grateful that McFarland is so interested in publishing books about baseball, but Szalontai's is not the first to be poorly edited.

Nevertheless, I, for one, am happy to have it, not just because I'm a New York Giants and Sal Maglie fan, but because I'm interested in the way the game was played in the years between World War II and the major-league expansion of the 1960s. Others with these interests will also find it fascinating.

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"Who is this Baby Ruth? And what does she do?" [George Bernard Shaw, quoted in Tom Meany's *Babe Ruth* (1947)]

## Book Review

Skip McAfee

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### BASEBALL AND COUNTRY MUSIC

Don Cusic. Madison (Wisc.): University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. 182p. ISBN 0-87972-858-2

When I first became enthralled with baseball (1946), I also discovered *The Grand Ole Opry*, which was broadcast all the way from Nashville to New York via the 50,000-watt WSM. So when I learned there was a book published that discussed these two cultures, I was eager to learn how they intertwined. Sadly, however, after reading this little volume, I'm still uncertain of the effects each had on the other.

Cusic took a different approach by showing the similarities between the parallel development of baseball and country music in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both had their roots in England (rounders and British folk songs) and were affected by immigration and assimilation, the struggle between labor and management (the reserve clause was similar to the recording contract), the quest for social acceptance and respect, the introduction of radio and television, the role of advertising and marketing, the myth and nature of heroes (Babe Ruth and Jimmie Rodgers), the introduction of the Latino market, and wealth in American society. Cusic maintains that baseball and country music both evolved from entertainment for the white working class to entertainment for the middle class. He even shows the similarities between night games and evening concerts as a way of broadening the appeal of both cultures. He makes a stretch by noting that the development of the interstate highway system benefited country music artists when traveling the country and baseball fans when traveling long distances to ball games.

Cusic notes that the Nashville Vols of the Southern Association were an accomplished minor-league team in the 1930s, just as Nashville was coming to be known as "Music City U.S.A." The current minor-league team in the city is called the Nashville Sounds, a tribute to the country music industry. Cusic writes (p.113) that the "Nashville Sound" (country music "concentrated on creating a smoother sound", exchanging the twangs and rhinestone suits for singers dressed in sports coats and tuxes) and the "crossovers" to rock and roll in the 1960s led country music to emerge "as the music of the middle class", just as "baseball had made this move by the early 1960s, becoming the sport of the American middle class."

Country music began in the South, a major source of big-league ballplayers who grew up on country music during the Depression and post-World War II years. After baseball established its Hall of Fame in 1939, the Country Music Association two decades later established its own hall of fame, based on the idea of baseball's shrine. Cusic concludes his treatise (p.146): "Coming from a working-class background and ending up on top of the world is the American dream. Baseball and country music both deliver that dream, and you can't get more American than that."

Maybe so, but I was still searching for a direct relationship between these two enterprises. Was it Dizzy Dean singing "Wabash Cannonball" on *Game of the Week*? Mickey Mantle crooning Hank Williams songs in the clubhouse?

Some country music stars were accomplished ballplayers: Charley Pride (Negro leagues pitcher who had a tryout with the California Angels), Roy Acuff (career cut short by sunstroke), Billy Ray Cyrus (attended college on a baseball scholarship), Jim Reeves (played minor-league ball in the Cardinals organization), Garth Brooks (participated in spring training with the Padres and Mets), and Bill Monroe. Ah, yes, Monroe, the creator of bluegrass music, formed a baseball team made up of his bandmates who, before concerts, played exhibition games against several minor-league teams. Writes Cusic (p.55-56): "Because he was so infatuated with baseball, Monroe often made his decisions about hiring musicians for his band with additional consideration based on how well they played ball. Banjo

player Stringbean was a good pitcher, which added to his value as a musician.” Monroe conceded that, if it hadn’t been for his weak eyesight, “I [would] have liked to be a baseball player. I could hit good and could’ve been a fair player.”

The connection between these two institutions is tenuous. True, singing cowboy Gene Autry was an avid baseball fan (he welcomed major-league ballplayers backstage during his performances) and his plans to secure major-league baseball in Los Angeles was crushed when Pearl Harbor was attacked; he had to wait another 20 years. During World War II, pop singer Bing Crosby (later part owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates) recorded several country songs, which took the music to a larger audience. Eddy Arnold invested in the Nashville Vols, as did Conway Twitty in the Nashville Sounds. Country music songs concerning baseball include “I Saw It All on the Radio” and “Cheap Seats”. John Denver’s “Thank God I’m a Country Boy” is still played during the seventh-inning stretch in Baltimore. Otherwise, the book is a disappointment if one was hoping to learn how country music and baseball influenced each other. Could country music themes (trucks, railroads, prison, mama, getting drunk, chasing skirts) have any connection to early ballplayers?

Cusic is professor of music business at Belmont Univ. as well as a writer and songwriter in Nashville. His baseball acumen needs strengthening: he confused Organized Baseball with Major League Baseball (p.15), stated that the 1922 World Series went nine games (p.16), had the Giants winning the 1923 World Series (p.16) and the Browns winning the 1945 American League pennant (p.73), misnamed the Southern Association as the Southern League in 1939 and 1940 (p.45, 57, 58), referred to Terry Moore as Terry Martin (p.76), stated (p.76) that Harry Walker singled Slaughter home in the 1946 World Series (Walker was credited with a double), misspelled Bill Bevens’ name (p.100), misspelled Ebbets Field (p.122), and really screwed up 1951 baseball history (p.94) by claiming that Thomson hit his homer with two outs, that “Ralph” Hodges screamed “The Giants win the pennant!”, and that the Yankees won the World Series in five games.

The book contains brief notes, a bibliographical essay, a bibliography, and a detailed index. The binding is very tight, impossible to keep the book open without clamping down on it.

## Book Review

Tom Swift

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### SANDY KOUFAX; a Lefty’s Legacy

Jane Leavy. New York: HarperCollins, 2002. 282p. ISBN 0-06-019533-9. \$23.95

The most treasured baseball biographies are the ones that take readers to ballparks they haven’t visited and inside minds they haven’t met.

It is no small achievement, as hundreds of biographical efforts have fallen short of the warning track. The task is that much more difficult when the subject is Sandy Koufax—a man known as much for his privacy as for his left arm. Koufax grants interviews as often as David Eckstein wins home run titles.

Leavy faced the challenge of not being able to interview her subject and still somehow pulled together a rare and insightful work, one that celebrates Koufax’ redoubtable career as arguably the greatest left-handed pitcher in history, and reveals a principled human being.

“He didn’t just dominate hitters or games,” Leavy writes (p.2). “He dominated the ball. He could make it do things: rise, break, sing. Gene Mauch, the old Phillies skipper, was once asked if Koufax was the best lefty he ever saw. Mauch replied: ‘The best righty, too.’”

Leavy, an award-winning and former sports and feature writer with the *Washington Post*, had one thing going for her that other Koufax biographers have not. Koufax allowed Leavy to interview his family, friends, and former Brooklyn-Los Angeles Dodgers teammates and opponents. During hundreds of queries, Leavy uncovered myriad nuggets that illustrate Koufax’ applied genius on the mound and his gentle integrity off it.

Koufax is a rarity not only in baseball, but also in media-driven America. When celebrity knocked, he politely locked the door. He is principled but doesn’t wear his values on his shirtsleeve. He didn’t pitch on Yom Kippur even when it meant missing a crucial World Series start. Koufax does not try to capitalize on his name, as the man he so often is compared to—Joe DiMaggio—so willingly did. Even as a ballplayer he read books and attended cultural events. With his fame and movie-star looks he could have had nearly any woman. Instead, he often talked about finding a suitable wife. Koufax loved baseball but he fashioned a fulfilling life without it.

“He doesn’t defy anything,” Bob Costas says (p.264) in Leavy’s book, “except the norm.”

Throughout *Sandy Koufax*, Leavy weaves chapters about her subject’s life with fascinating details of Sept. 9, 1965, the day Koufax threw a perfect game. Therefore, she tells Koufax’ story in layers. This is not another simple chronology or stat book on a ballplayer, where the first chapter is about his childhood, the last is about his final breath, and in between one learns he hit prodigious home runs or deftly whiffed batters. Leavy hunts for bigger game.

A sample of Leavy’s prose (p.6): “The beauty of his delivery was a function of his mechanics and his mechanics were a function of obeying the laws of nature. Every pitch came over the top. He didn’t drop down. He didn’t come sidarm. He didn’t fool around. His fluidity lulled minds and dulled reflexes. *Let the body put you to sleep and let the arm get you out*, he would say. No matter how many times a batter saw it, the ball’s arrival at home plate always came as a shock. It was a humbling, disorienting sensation. In the immortal words of Willie Stargell, trying to hit Koufax was like ‘trying to drink coffee with a fork’. Hitters talk about it all the time and invariably in the same words. The ball presented itself as an offering. *It was right there. I was right on it*. And, then, nope, good-bye, it was gone.”

Leavy is comprehensive and meticulous. Those seeking details about Koufax’ days as a Brooklyn boy, of his early career troubles as a bonus baby in Brooklyn, or his celebrated and unmatched seasons in Los Angeles, will not be disappointed. But for every stat provided, there is a quote or an insight that says something louder than figures alone can speak.

For example, Leavy does a masterful job detailing Koufax at his peak, during the years 1962 to 1966, when he so overpowered lineups that appropriate superlatives were not easy to fashion. During that time Koufax won three Cy Young awards (when only one was given for both leagues) and threw four no-hitters. He led the league in ERA every year and won 25 or more games three times.

While Koufax was whipping the New York Yankees in the 1963 World Series, a year in which he went 25-5 with a 1.88 ERA, Hall of Fame Bronx Bomber catcher Yogi Berra stood on the sidelines and asked the question on everyone’s lips (p.138): “How the hell did he lose five?”

Leavy explains how Koufax and pitching partner Don Drysdale challenged baseball’s antiquated reserve clause, and how Koufax coped with an arthritic pitching arm, which caused his retirement at age 30.

Throughout *Sandy Koufax*, Leavy provides rich detail using creative storytelling. Her subject is alluring and she compliments his impressive legacy. The work is impressive enough that even though he hasn’t thrown a meaningful pitch in 37 years, by reading this book you can again (or for the first time) see Koufax’ brilliant windup.

