

Crepeau, Richard C. *Baseball: America's Diamond Mind, 1919-1941*. Orlando, Florida: University Presses of Florida, 1980. Pp. xii, 228. Index, bibliography, pictures. \$15.00.

The time worn maxim that “the more things change, the more they remain the same” applied to baseball between World War I and World War II according to Richard Crepeau, professor of history at the University of Central Florida and author of *Baseball: America's Diamond Mind*. Though the style of the game, the method of management, and the means of promoting the game changed significantly between 1917 and 1941, the moguls who ran the game, the writers who reported the game, and those who fanatically followed the

game, adamantly believed that baseball remained the most concrete, visible representation of American society. This book is not a chronological history of baseball during the inter-war years, rather it is a successful attempt at analyzing the image which baseball people believed that their game projected and at showing how the changes which did occur in the game were concomitant with the vast social upheaval which the nation experienced during the tumultuous twenties and the depressed thirties.

Indeed, baseball changed during the years when the nation adjusted to an urban-industrial economy. The style of the game altered when Babe Ruth introduced the fan to the long ball on a regular basis. Many in the sporting press decried the loss of "scientific baseball," failing to realize the lure which power had to the public in the dynamic twenties. While Ruth exuded personality, the impact of American corporate life which downplayed personality and stressed conformity was evident in baseball. To Crepeau, the baseball star of the thirties wore the grey-flannel uniform much as David Reisman's other directed man wore the grey-flannel suit in his executive offices. Joe DiMaggio played the game with style, dignity, and grace but his aloof personality strongly contrasted with the gregarious Ruth. Crepeau concludes that DiMaggio "was the new American man—always in control, never showing emotion." (p. 125).

Business efficiency rubbed off on baseball. Branch Rickey's farm system attempted to organize the player development process for the advantage of the individual teams. Similarly, the use of night baseball and broadcast journalism required cautious evaluation before finding universal acceptance. Many teams resisted the farm system, radio broadcasts, and night baseball until these innovations brought pennants and profits to the pioneers.

Baseball had trouble coming to grips with some aspects of urban society. The new ethnic groups appeared in baseball as well as throughout industrial society. Just as the nation resisted full acceptance of them in the guise of immigration restriction laws and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, sporting periodicals still used ethnic slurs regularly when referring to players of Italian, Polish, and Jewish backgrounds. In contrast to their cavalier attitude toward the ethnics however, many sportswriters chided major league baseball for its continued enforcement of racial barriers.

Despite the rather dramatic alterations in the game, baseball continued to see itself in terms of the central factors in the American system. It was democratic, presenting opportunity to any young man who had ability. While Ruth is an obvious example of this process, Crepeau adroitly points out lesser knowns who rose rapidly to the major league level. The game exuded honesty. When its integrity was seriously challenged during the infamous Black

Sox scandal, owners found the strict disciplinarian that was required to restore the honesty of the game. Baseball people believed that the game accentuated individuality, particularly when contrasted with the faceless game of football. Personalities could be obvious and one did not have to be a star to be lauded. This was evidenced, for example, by the laudatory poetry written on the premature death of William "Pickles" Dillhoefer, a .233 hitting reserve catcher for the St. Louis Cardinals from 1919 to 1921. Baseball also engendered a sense of community spirit, not only in the small towns where the game predominated, but also in major league cities, most visibly Brooklyn, where fans continued to support their Dodgers despite a poor team.

Crepeau effectively mined the *Sporting News*, the most complete repository of journalistic attitudes toward the game, as well as making use of numerous other newspaper and magazine accounts of baseball. His spritely style is dosed with humor as well as poignant quotations from the wide variety of contributors to the *Sporting News*. The volume is not repetitive of the standard work by Voigt and Seymour, rather it makes a solid, dynamic contribution to the understanding of American cultural development between the wars.

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