

Broeg, Bob, *My Baseball Scrapbook*. St. Louis: River City Publishers, 1983. Pp. xiii, 184. Pictures. Foreword by Joe Garagiola. \$14.95

Bob Broeg, veteran baseball writer and long term sports editor of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, is a well known writer of popular biographies of major league players. His published works include two biographies of Stan Musial, one of Frankie Frisch, a history of the St. Louis Cards, and a collection of biographical articles on major league stars which appeared in 1971 under the title of *Super Stars of Baseball*. Well known to readers of *The Sporting News* (which earlier printed the biographical articles), Broeg's sketches have been valuable aids to baseball students, especially those assigned biographical sketches by the DAB or other biographical dictionaries on American sport.

For nearly half a century the St. Louis-based Broeg has covered the major baseball scene. In his introduction to his *Scrapbook* Broeg wryly admits to being conned into doing this updated series of articles on baseball greats by a pair of River City Press reps. One of the latter suggested that Broeg's work could become assigned reading in his college-level sports history course. Whatever his motives, Broeg offers a fresh, updated set of biographical articles. The end result is that the *Scrapbook* includes 54 sketches of baseball greats (including a group sketch of the 1919 Black Sox villains). Those selected are Broeg's all-time personal favorites. Most of those covered Broeg knew personally; in the case of the real old-timers, they have had Broeg's admiration. Of the 54 biographical articles, none are representative of the 19th century major league scene. Eight (including Mack, Wagner, McGraw, Cobb, Mathewson, Johnson, Alexander, and Maranville) starred during the major league's Silver Age (1901-1919). Eighteen (including Ruth, Landis, Rickey, Hornsby, Sisler, Frisch, Terry, Gehrig, Hack Wilson, Cochrane, Dizzy Dean, Pepper Martin, Grove, Gomez, Cronin, Grimm, Moe Berg, and Bobo Newsom) starred during the game's second Golden Age (1920-1941). Thirteen (including DiMaggio, Feller, Slaughter, Musial, Jackie Robinson, Berra, Schoendienst, Campanella, Manager Stengel, Mays, Mantle, Spahn and Fred Hutchinson) are representative of the game's Postwar Era (1941-1960). Ten (including Clemente, Koufax, Brock, Gibson, Aaron, Frank Robinson, Bench, Seaver, Palmer and Pete Rose) starred during the current Expansion Era. In addition Broeg chooses two stars, Satchel Paige and Jim "Cool Papa" Bell, to represent the segregated Negro majors, and for parochial reasons Joe Garagiola and Cardinal owner "Gussie" Busch also make the list.

The biographical sketches are arranged in rough chronological order beginning with Mack and ending with Rose; lavish photos grace the book. Of Broeg's 54 selections, 19 have St. Louis connections and 31 are National Leaguers. Such skewing, along with the omission of outstanding stars like Ted Williams, Speaker, Roush, Carew, Hank Greenberg, Ernie Banks, Reggie Jackson, or key innovators like O'Malley and Marvin Miller, open Broeg to the charge of selective bias. But let it be remembered that after all these are his personal choices of greats. Undoubtedly neophyte baseball fans will relish these sketches which are done in breezy, upbeat, unabashedly romanticized style by Broeg. As a surviving member of the rapidly extinguishing school of "gee whiz" writers, Broeg wallows in clichés, colorful anecdotes (many of them more than twice-told), and inventive nicknames (of which "the Lion of Lonaconing" for Grove and "Huck Finn in Flannels" for Schoendienst are strident examples).

But seasoned fans, including baseball historians and their students, are apt to be more critical of Broeg's sketches. While many contain first hand observations and useful factual nuggets, nearly all lack essential biographical details and critical interpretations. Moreover, an index and a coherent table of contents would have been helpful. As examples of incompleteness, half of the article on DiMaggio is given to an expanded quote from Stengel; that of Clemente inordinately dwells on his alleged hypochondriacal traits; that of Berra is studded with "Yogi" malapropisms; that of Moe Berg is maddeningly evasive about his supposed wartime spying. Still there are nuggets to be panned and only a few errors make for fools gold; thus, 1886 was not the year when walks counted as hits, Gandil was not the longest-lived Black Sox villain, DiMaggio did not hit in 17 games after completing his record skein, and Broeg needs to decide which among the three switch-hitters he touts as greatest really was the greatest.

In general, sports historians can make use of Broeg's sketches. Most contain valuable bits of information that can be molded with other facts and interpretive skills to form more realistic interpretations of these men and their impact on the major league scene. On another level Broeg's style of writing can be used as a sterling example of the "gee whiz" school or sportswriting that once dominated baseball reportage.

Still one must warn historians not to try to read the *Scrapbook* straight through at a single sitting. To do so is to be inundated with Broeg's campy sportsaguese style of writing—an experience comparable to listening to Victor Borge's purported "Holiday for Strings" (99 snare drums and a clarinet!). Or the effect might be comparable to the great Inquisitor Torquemada's scheme for curing the lust of newlyweds by binding the unclothed partners together with perfumed ropes and leaving them alone in a room for a couple of days! Far better would it be to take small doses of Broeg's sketches spaced out over several winter nights.