

Quigley, Martin. *The Crooked Pitch: The Curveball in American Baseball History*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books. 1984. Pp. 194. Pictures, illustrations, \$16.95.

Martin Quigley served as a public relations consultant to the St. Louis Cardinals during the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to collaborating with Joe

Garagiola on *Baseball is a Funny Game* and Kirby Higbe on *The High Hard One*, he has written two novels on baseball. *Crooked Pitch* seeks to describe the role of breaking pitches in the evolution of baseball. Quigley contends that the various crooked pitches from curve to split finger added an equalizing element of deception that kept baseball from being a strictly power game for only the biggest and strongest.

The jacket cites Red Barber calling the piece “the definitive book on breaking balls, illegal pitches, and the lengths pitchers will go to survive in the baseball jungle.” In reality, *Crooked Pitch* is a collection of reminiscences, opinions and musings by an obviously long time and intense fan whose occupation kept him close to the game he loved. In a light breezy style laced with humor Quigley touches on a potpourri of subjects from the origins of baseball, various pitches, players, and memorable incidents, to a discussion of the Bernoulli effect in baseball. Much of what he treats is familiar ground such as Babe Ruth’s “called shot” and Don Larsen’s perfect game. Most entertaining are Quigley’s accounts of the various experiments to test the view that the curve was merely an “optical illusion” and his descriptions of the various doctoring devices in the chapter on the spitter.

The book is aimed at the casual fan, and scholars will need to look elsewhere for a historical treatment of the breaking ball. Quigley’s volume lacks footnotes, references and a bibliography. Harold Seymour’s *Baseball the Early Years* contains a more concise and convincing assessment of the origins of the curve, and Quigley makes no attempt to treat his beloved sport in a wider context than mere spectator interest. Baseball historians will find some value in the more than seventy photographs drawn from *The Sporting News* which include Bob Feller’s testing his speed against an electronic device and a rarely seen shot of Yogi Berra’s missing a pop foul as Allie Reynolds pitched for a second no hitter in 1951. Apart from the photographs, this book’s greatest value is as entertaining testimony to the intense grip that baseball can have upon its followers.

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