

Book Reviews

Berry, Robert C., Gould, William B., and Staudohar, Paul D. *Labor Relations in Professional Sports*. Dover, Massachusetts; Auburn House Publishing Company, 1986. Pp. xii, 289, notes, index.

One of the most significant developments in professional sports in recent years has been the emergence of the players union. Long thought impossible or totally inappropriate by both management and players, the union has emerged as a dominant power force in the sports industry. This development has dramatically changed the relationship between owner and player (management and labor) as well as the economic structure of professional sports. The player is no longer the hired hand or the interchangeable part, but collectively the players have become a significant factor in determining the shape and character of the industry.

In *Labor Relations in Professional Sports*, Robert Berry, William Gould, and Paul Staudohar have made a largely successful effort to examine these developments and their consequences focusing on baseball, football, hockey and basketball. With the exception of baseball, where Lupian and Lowenfisch in *The Imperfect Diamond* have written the definitive work on labor relations, this volume is a pioneering effort. It grew out of a law review article on the subject, and all three authors are experienced in the field. Paul Staudohar has simultaneously published *Sports Industry and Collective Bargaining* (ILR Press, 1986) out of the State School of Industrial Relations at Cornell University.

In the opening two chapters of *Labor Relations in Professional Sports* the general structure of the industry and the legal environment, both historical and current, are presented. The next five chapters look at the four major sports, one sport per chapter, with a separate chapter devoted to the 1982 football strike. The last two chapters look at the current state of affairs, including unresolved issues, future prospects, and an interesting discussion of the 1985 baseball strike.

Overall Berry, Gould and Staudohar have done a commendable job. As an introduction to this often complex subject this volume offers a clear, concise presentation of the historical development, current condition, and future of labor relations in professional sports. For the most part the technical side of the legal relationships are skillfully and clearly presented, and the book is especially good when dealing with labor negotiations. The issues are clearly delineated, the course of negotiations are tracked, and the outcomes are explained and analyzed and their consequences explored.

Each sport had its unique history. The nature of the unions and the course of their development are correspondingly different. This volume clarifies and

analyzes these differences. There are also commonalities and inter-relationships among these unions and these industries, and these too are woven into the text. Particularly enlightening are the comparisons between baseball and football, and the relative success of unions in these two industries. The failures of the NFLPA are explained in terms of conditions within the industry, thus relieving at least some of the burden of blame usually attributed to Ed Garvey. Labor relations in the NHL have been considerably different from the other major sports and the authors look at the how and why of these differences. The case of the NBA offers yet another variation with its unique legal climate created out of the Robertson Case, as well as the role that race plays in the labor-management relationship in the league. Much more is needed on this latter subject which is only introduced in this chapter. In addition important questions are raised throughout the book about the role of agents, their relationship to the players unions, and the future of agents in professional sports.

There are only a few weaknesses in this book. The writing is uneven. At least one of the authors is an academic obscurant of considerable accomplishment, and his role in Chapter One might discourage the reader from pushing forward.

Unfortunately the author of each individual chapter is not identified. Objection too must be raised to the amazing assertion at the opening of Chapter Three that "The true origins of baseball are likely never to be known." (p. 47) In addition, the fact that the word "Basketball" rather than "Baseball" was used in identifying the court case, *American League Baseball Club v. Chase* on page twenty-eight slipped by the proofing process, is unfortunate. Finally a complaint about the footnotes which are placed at the end of each chapter. In this book a large number of these are content footnotes, and it is my contention that if content footnotes are used they belong at the bottom of the page. Better yet is the rule of a former mentor who told his students, if it's important enough to be in a content footnote, it's important enough to be in the text.

Despite these minor points *Labor Relations in Professional Sports* is an important book for anyone who would like to understand the contemporary professional sports scene. It offers a comprehensive and generally comprehensible survey of labor relations within both an historical and current industrial context. It also explains why the term "strike" is no longer confined to a baseball game.

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