

Porter, David L., ed. *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987. Pp. xvii, 713. \$75.00.

David L. Porter's *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: Baseball* is the first of four volumes, the second of which will deal with football, the third with outdoor sports, and the fourth with indoor sports. It contains biographies between 200 and 900 words long of 433 baseball players, 22 managers, six umpires, and 61 executives. Each entry is followed by a bibliography of as few as two to more than ten items. Appendices list the entries by main category, the players by main position played, all entries by place of birth. Negro league

baseball entries are listed, as are the various major and negro leagues (the abbreviations of many minor leagues are given on pp. xiii-xvii), and finally there is a list of the National Baseball Hall of Fame members.

Porter contributes a preface in which he describes the criteria he used in selecting subjects and the guidelines used for compiling each entry. He remarks that "over one hundred contributors, most by participants in either the Society for American Baseball Research or the North American Society for Sport History, submitted biographical entries" (p. ix). "Subjects excelled," Porter says, "as players, managers, coaches, officials, club executives, league administrators, rules developers, broadcasters, writers, and/or promoters" (p. vii). The last three categories, Porter says later, "will be treated in the third or fourth volume" (p. viii). In fact, we are told to expect biographies of Ring Lardner and Grantland Rice in the *Outdoor Sports* volume. One can only hope to learn about others like them—the Spink family, F. C. Lane come immediately to mind—in that volume. Of the sportswriters, only Henry Chadwick makes it into this volume, presumably as a rules developer.

Porter lists three general criteria for inclusion: the person must have been born or grown up in the U.S., "have made exceptional accomplishments in at least one sport," and "have made a significant impact on his or her sport" (p. vii). The baseball figures "usually met several" of six criteria which Porter also lists: excellence as player, manager, coach, umpire, and/or administrator; Hall of Fame membership; a batting average of around .300, with either 2,000 hits or 300 home runs; 175 major league wins as a pitcher, an outstanding win/loss percentage or an excellent earned run average; remarkable fielding and/or running abilities; having "a major impact on the development of professional baseball" (p. viii).

Porter urged contributors to include material on each subject's personal life: date and place of birth, parental background, education, and marriage. In addition, the highlights of the subject's baseball career are provided, with emphasis on statistical achievements and "personal impact on the sport" (p. ix).

The resultant entries are unusually readable and informative, if various. The least effective rehearse material more easily found in the Macmillan *Encyclopedia of Baseball*, the best pack considerable information and interpretation into a brief entry. The bibliographies provide immediate help in learning more about a particular player. Here it is also helpful to remember the largest selection of Myron J. Smith's *Baseball: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (McFarland, 1986) is devoted to "Individual Biography."

Porter makes the biases of his selection clear in his preface. This is *major league* baseball; little attention is given to the minor leagues (though there is an entry for George Trautman). This is *professional* baseball; there are no entries for the various forms of amateur game from the Little League on up. To a great extent this is *twentieth-century* baseball; nineteenth-century figures are present in proportionately fewer numbers than twentieth. Many negro league stars are included. The dual criteria of excellence and having an impact on the sport do create two kinds of problems. The first is the tendency of some entries to be

narrative versions of the Macmillian *Encyclopedia*. The other is the omission of significant figures who fall short of excellence on the playing field. Here is my own partial list: Frank "Trader" Lane, Danny Gardella, Denny McLain (though the Lou Boudreau entry indicates McLain will be included), author-pitchers Jim Brosnan and Jim Bouton, any number of scouts, Charley Lau (I am not sure there is anyone in the book solely because of his coaching excellence), Peter Seitz, Preacher Roe. It is, however, the nature of such books as this to be exclusive, and each of us will form our own all-star team of those left out.

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