

Levine. Peter. ed. *Baseball History 4: An Annual of Original Baseball Research*. Westport. CT: Meckler Publishing. 1991. Pp. 185.S39.50.

Peter Levine's effort to bring an array of the best research on baseball's history to a larger audience began with the publication of *Baseball History* as a quarterly journal in 1986. Sadly, it comes to at least a temporary halt with the publication of *Baseball History 4*. the fourth and final version of the

journal released as a hardback annual. As Bruce Kuklick writes in this issue, in a review of Harold Seymour's *Baseball: The People's Game*: "The trouble is that much baseball history is antiquarian-of moment only to those devoted to the game; the history has not been connected to anything outside the game." *Baseball History*, at its best, addressed this problem, breaking ground with its popular but scholarly approach to the study of the game. Its swan song continues this tradition, offering articles, reviews, and fiction that come at the sport from a variety of vantage points.

My favorite article was James Overmyer's portrait of Frank Grant, a Massachusetts-born African-American who became one of the first victims of baseball's color line. Overmyer delivers a sophisticated piece of research, puncturing myths based on casual reading of contemporary accounts of baseball in the 1880s and 1890s. This is, perhaps, the finest biographical portrait of a pre-1900 black player. It bodes well for Overmyer's work-in-progress about the Newark Eagles. Another contributor is John Holway, whose piece on Piper Davis reinforces his position as the preeminent biographer of Negro League players. He and Overmyer offer contrasting approaches to the study of black players during baseball's segregated era. Holway relies on oral history and painstaking reconstruction of statistics from box scores in the black press, while Overmyer sifts through death certificates and the *Sporting Life* from late last century.

Also focusing on baseball during the nineteenth century, Joel Franks sketches the evolution of the game in California from 1859 through 1893. Franks offers a chronological study of baseball that links its development as an economic concern to the emergence of "a sense of community in a state where so many people were newcomers."

Jesse Berrett's short but insightful piece on promoting baseball during the 1930s depression is timely, given major league baseball's belated realization that it has lost its hegemony over youth and minorities. Berrett shows how baseball responded to the depression's challenge by rediscovering advertising and promotion. He finds in Ford Frick, a sportswriter who became National League president in 1934, the symbol of baseball's emphasis on selling itself.

Robert Cole offers a fascinating analysis of barnstorming. He provides both historical perspective and critical analysis of this important, but usually overlooked aspect of the game. His exhaustive research connects barnstorming to several questions, including how organized baseball sought to control it, what it meant to communities far away from cities with major league franchises, and how the emergence of television ultimately destroyed it.

Finally, Steven Thompson challenges us to explore baseball's meaning to a culture by offering his thoughts on the trials that Randy Bass experienced during his years with the Hanshin Tigers in Japan. Thompson perceptively argues that understanding baseball's different permutations as it crosses national boundaries is a step toward comprehending those societies. He reminds

us how much anthropology has to offer historians, especially in regard to baseball.

*Baseball History* also includes yet another wonderful short story by W. P. Kinsella, one that I hope will eventually be expanded to novel length, plus a thoughtful set of book reviews and an excellent bibliography of baseball books released between January 1990 and April 1991.

*Baseball History* is ceasing publication due to Meckler's decision to pull out of baseball publishing: the company suffered from overpricing and undermarketing its baseball books. Perhaps one of the new journals devoted to the game will carry on the fine tradition that Peter Levine began in 1986. If there is more that the game's history offers than simply reveling in its past, those who study it must continue to ask the kinds of questions and write in the style that this series has encouraged.

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