

Lanctot, Neil. *Fair Dealing and Clean Playing: The Hilldale Club and the Development of Black Professional Baseball, 1910-1932*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1994. Pp. v. 298. Notes, bibliography, photographs. appendix, index. \$25.55.

Neil Lanctot has written a thoroughly engrossing socioeconomic history of how the administrative efforts of Ed Bolden transformed the Hilldale Athletic Club from a sandlot baseball team to a successful professional enterprise. Lanctot begins by illustrating how the historical development of baseball in Philadelphia profoundly impacted upon the origins of the Hilldale club. He also shows how black baseball grew and prospered after World War I, declined in the late 1920s, and eventually folded in the wake of the Great Depression. In addition, Lanctot highlights Hilldale's remarkable success at a time when the majority of Philadelphia's black businesses ended in failure.

Lanctot, a professor of history at the University of Delaware, worked as part of a research team compiling Negro League pitching and batting statistics for MacMillan's *Baseball Encyclopedia*. It was through this experience that he was introduced to Hilldale and the world of black baseball. His most important find was the remarkably preserved financial records of the Hilldale club, housed at the Bill Cash-Lloyd Thompson Collection in the Philadelphia Afro-American and Cultural Museum. The collection was a compilation of financial documents, correspondence, scorebooks, and photographs. Lanctot also mined several African American newspapers in an effort to reconstruct the financial and administrative side of the business of black baseball, and he provides a valuable comparative analysis of other professional clubs.

Lanctot's exhaustive research enabled him to provide a behind-the-scenes account of the efforts of black and white entrepreneurs to create a successful business enterprise. His examination of the symbiotic business relationship between black and white semiprofessional teams provide the most in-depth study of professional baseball outside the organized structure. While organized baseball was forced to reduce operations during the World War I years, semi-professional baseball flourished, due largely to the presence of professional players. Due to the proliferation of white semiprofessional teams during the war, the stronger African American clubs found themselves in demand by a plethora of available opponents. Even more significant was the increased interest in amateur and semiprofessional baseball leading to a flurry of park construction in

Philadelphia, presenting a rare opportunity for blacks and whites to mingle despite the increased residential segregation in the 1920s. Lanctot points out that Hilldale's financial success was inextricably linked to their involvement with white semiprofessional teams.

Ed Bolden epitomized the black middle-class professional that emerged in the early twentieth century. A postal worker from 1904 to 1946, Bolden participated in several black fraternal organizations, a standard practice for most black entrepreneurs who relied primarily on black patronage for support. The Hilldale corporation gave generously to black causes, and the team took part in annual benefit and charity games for hospitals, churches, and war veterans. While Hilldale was a race-based enterprise in terms of its ownership, management, and labor force, Bolden's plight as chief executive officer exemplified the essential dilemma black enterprises confronted in the early twentieth century. Many black entrepreneurs advocated Booker T. Washington's economic philosophy, which combined the gospel of work and wealth with the doctrine of self-help and racial solidarity, but the Hilldale leader was a businessman first and a "race" man second. Bolden summed up his business philosophy in 1925 by stating, "Close analysis will prove that only where the color line fades and cooperation instituted are our business advances gratified. Segregation in any form, including self-imposed, is not the solution" (p. 66).

While Lanctot's comparative analysis of the other black professional clubs is an innovative approach, it is also a major weakness. Lanctot fails to recognize the aggressive nature of Chicago's black leadership in the pre-World War I years. Due to blacks being excluded from most white commercialized amusements, Chicago's black leaders attempted to gain a hegemony over the Windy City's growing black consumer market. They created the Leland Giants Baseball and Amusement Corporation which exemplified the modern corporation, seeking to diversify its income through the proprietorship and management of more than one business. No other race-based enterprise in the early twentieth century typified the compilation of ideologies commonly attributed to Booker T. Washington.

Chicago's black leaders insisted upon the necessity of African Americans "buying black" if black businesses were to develop. Furthermore, if African Americans acquired wealth and middle-class respectability, the race would earn acceptance into the mainstream of American society, and prejudice would be eliminated. In addition to the ball club, the Association operated a restaurant and a skating rink. Lanctot inaccurately states that the Association leased their ballpark, when, in fact, they owned it. My research of both the *Chicago Defender* and the *Broad Ax* revealed that this was one of the primary accomplishments the Association utilized to indicate race progress.

Lanctot's comparative analysis would have been stronger if he had acknowledged how black community settlement patterns impacted on the development of the black baseball business. Unlike New York and Chicago, which became more concentrated, there was never one monolithic group

geographically consolidated in Philadelphia. A more concentrated consumer market provided Andrew “Rube” Foster a more viable territorial region over which to gain a hegemony. Combined with his barnstorming pattern of the West and South during the winter months, Foster transformed the Chicago American Giants into a full-time operation prior to World War I. In contrast, Philadelphia’s scattered black population, coupled with the Quaker City’s reluctance to embrace technological innovations (such as commuter railroads) that changed the face of urban cities, enabled sandlot teams to exist longer there than in any other northern city. These obstacles made it difficult for an African American owner to rise to national prominence until after World War I; and that entrepreneur was Ed Bolden.

Despite these weaknesses, Lanctot’s study contributes immensely to our knowledge of black baseball prior to the era of Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson. More importantly, Lanctot illustrates that traditional historical research methods can be utilized in examining black baseball. His study brings to light one of black baseball’s most successful entrepreneurs—Ed Bolden—whose “canny business sense and reputation for ‘fair dealing and clean playing’ had placed his team at the very top of black professional baseball in the 1920s, leading to the formation of the Eastern Colored League in 1922” (p. 230). Moreover, Lanctot’s study provides valuable insights into the obstacles race-based enterprises confronted in the early twentieth century, and the subsequent responses black entrepreneurs utilized to address them. It also grants Ed Bolden’s rightful place in both black baseball and African American history.

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