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## Book Reviews

BOWMAN, JOHN AND ZOSS, JOEL. *Diamonds in the Rough: The Untold Story of Baseball* Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1996, 433 pp. Photographs, index, \$16.95, paper, reprint.

Robert Frost wrote "some baseball is the fate of us all," and that remains true regardless of the uncertainties of labor negotiations, egomaniacal owners and players, or whoever or whatever conspires to destroy the game. In *Diamonds in the Rough*, Joel Zoss and John Bowman capture the vast appeal of the game that has been called our national pastime for the past 150 years by collecting a cornucopia of baseball lore and information. Now some seven years after publication, this gem has been made available in a paperback reprint edition.

Through 14 chapters and more than 400 pages, nearly every conceivable facet of baseball history is explored. Zoss and Bowman go into areas seldom explored and treat subjects that may surprise, shock, or delight everyone from the casual observer to the most rabid of fans. From the Civil War to the Cold War, baseball has affected and been affected by the military history of the nation. From baseball cards to Rotisserie Leagues, the fans have found a multitude of ways to take the game into a wide variety of activities. Movies, music, and literature can express the power baseball has over the soul. The chapter on literature alone makes this volume worth having as a guide to some of the best reading on the game. For those who are not acquainted with the best prose and poetry of the game, it will be a revelation.

All these topics and more get detailed and delightful attention from Zoss and Bowman. Chapters dealing with history; the international scene; and the issues of race, ethnicity, and gender are all part of this great sampler of baseball Americana. One chapter focuses on Jackie Robinson's impact on the game and on African Americans. A chapter on women, although somewhat dated by recent scholarship, remains a good introduction to a number of issues related to gender and baseball.

More startling are the stories of alcohol and illegal drugs, which have been serious problems for the game since the mid-nineteenth century. Although often seen as a problem of recent times, Zoss and Bowman offer overpowering evidence

of alcohol and drug abuse in the more distant past, and explore the changing attitudes toward those substances over time.

The most peculiar chapter is "Tragic Endings," which details murders, assaults, suicides, mental breakdowns, and career-ending and -altering injuries, including the death of Ray Chapman from a beanball during the 1920 season. Even more startling are the stories of two cases when the cry "kill the umpire" came to fruition. But clearly the most bizarre injury ever associated with baseball befell a middle-aged Oakland A's fan who made medical history while celebrating one of the A's World Series victories in the 1970s. Zoss and Bowman supply the anatomical and surgical details, but suffice it to note here that Erica Jong would have been proud of this fan and his lover.

There is a chapter on baseball as a pop culture phenomenon that details the fads of baseball memorabilia and card collecting, and takes a look at the many versions of baseball that have appeared as board games. Again the dated nature of the book can be seen here, as there is no reference to computer and video games. One of the best historical sections deals with baseball's creation myths and the historical evolution of the game, including its connections to rounders and cricket.

The one glaring weakness of the book involves an inconsistency of attribution. Throughout the work, sources are cited for some of the tales and stories, but not others. At points when standard history is refined, it would be nice to know where the authors found their information. At other points, I knew the source and wondered why no attribution was given. This problem could have been avoided with a concluding bibliographic essay or a complete bibliography and detailed footnotes. This would not only have allowed the historian to track down the evidence, but more importantly, it would provide direction to the average reader who might want to further pursue a particular topic.

Although *Diamonds in the Rough* is not a definitive history of baseball, it does offer a delightful range of materials of both a historical and anthropological nature. Zoss and Bowman obviously pored over the vast literature available on the game, and have put some of the very best information here in one volume. Although somewhat dated by both recent scholarship and changing fads and technology, this work remains a very good source of information on baseball and includes facts and stories to surprise and educate readers. If you missed it the first time, don't miss it this time.

—RICHARD C. CREPEAU  
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