
SULLIVAN, DEAN (ed.). *Early Innings: A Documentary History of Baseball, 1825-1908*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. Pp. 312. \$15 pb.

This volume is a collection of 120 documents chosen from newspaper and magazine articles, autobiographies, baseball histories, pamphlets, club constitutions, and other primary sources. The selections cover a variety of aspects of early baseball from the first accounts of townball to the report of the Special Commission, which promulgated the Doubleday-Cooperstown myth.

The work begins with the author's preface and an introduction by Benjamin Rader, which presents a brief overview of the main topics and issues of the game as it evolved from a premodern pastime to a thriving sports business. Sullivan arranges the materials in chronological order through seven chapters and a postscript. The brief chapter introductions do not adequately develop the themes outlined in Rader's introduction, nor do they synthesize the findings of recently published secondary works on 19th-century baseball. However, the headnotes that precede the documents are very helpful in providing background information and in placing the pieces in proper historical context.

Early Innings is strongest on the origins and early development of the New York Knickerbocker version of baseball; the evolution of rules; the rise of professionalism, commercialism, and a rational business structure; and labor-management relations. This work includes many excerpts that are critically important for a proper understanding of the sport's formative period. To cite just one example, the book features William Hulbert's critique of the first professional league (the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players), followed by his proposal to found the National League. Sullivan also includes some very valuable material on the social and cultural aspects of the game, especially the first participation by African Americans and their unsuccessful struggle for equal treatment by the white baseball fraternity. Sport historians will also appreciate the pieces on an Indian ball game and early American cricket; popular culture buffs will no doubt applaud the editor's choice of a few songs and poems.

The weaknesses of *Early Innings* appear mainly in its treatment of the pre-Civil War era and in its lack of coverage of certain topics of social history that have received special attention by baseball historians in recent years. The book does not include documents that directly compare the relative merits and popularity of the New York version of baseball, townball (or the “Massachusetts game”), and cricket. Thus it does not adequately explain why the New York Knickerbocker form of the sport defeated its rivals and became America’s national pastime. Moreover, the volume devotes relatively too much space to the rise of professional baseball and too little to amateur, work, factory, and college teams. Although it does include some material on women, better selections are available on female participation as both players and spectators.

While Sullivan should be commended for his treatment of race, he could have been more thorough on the subjects of ethnicity and social class, especially considering the early involvement of the Irish community and the secondary literature on the class origins of the first professionals. Finally, more emphasis should have been given to audiences, especially spectator behavior. Here Sullivan gives the reader some brief indication of the prevalence of gambling, drinking, and disorderly behavior by fans during the sport’s formative years. More attention should have been paid to these issues, even at the expense of deleting documents that review such familiar incidents as the players’ efforts to organize unions. On balance, *Early Innings* is informative, interesting, and entertaining. For scholars it is a welcome addition to the literature on baseball history, and for general fans it should provide many hours of enjoyable browsing. College professors and high school teachers will find it useful as a resource for student paper assignments. Specialists on the social history of 19th-century baseball will still have to go beyond this book and dig deeper into primary materials to learn more about women, immigrants, and the middle and working classes as players and spectators.

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