
PRINCE, CARL E. *Brooklyn's Dodgers: The Bums and the Borough and the Best of Baseball, 1947-1957*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pp. xiv, 202. Notes, illustrations, index. \$25.00.

Historian Carl Prince of New York University is an all-star in the League of Historians of the Early Republic. However, this old-time Brooklynite and Dodgers fan needs more seasoning when it comes to the League of Baseball Historians.

Prince's goal is to place the Dodgers and Brooklyn in the broad social and political context of post-World War II America. By emphasizing both how the Dodgers overcame racial prejudices and united against race-baiting teams, and how its management was more consistently anticommunist than any other pro team (the Cincinnati Reds were renamed Red Legs), Prince places the team in the heart of the conformist 1950s culture. He points to the macho behavior of players vis-a-vis female fans, and also considers gender as a factor in women's relationship to the team. Prince argues that the close relationship between ethnic Brooklyn and the club was most evident in the schools and at the Parade Grounds. Finally, he asserts that the team was a rare institution that cut across racial, ethnic, and religious community tensions, "a generally soothing common ground, one where at least some level of urban civility survived" (pp. xii-xiii). Chapters examine the subjects of integration, political culture, gender, ethnicity, and local youth (although the Knothole Gang is only mentioned in passing). There are a number of impressive analyses, particularly Prince's discussion of baseball and Brooklyn saloons (which would have benefitted from some oral testimony), the imagery of the "Bums," and his consideration of Brooklyn amateurism and Prospect Park.

Prince examines the conservatism of ballplayers. He discusses Jackie Robinson, a vocal Republican, who was seemingly out of step with African Americans at the time. Prince also analyzes the politics of owners Branch Rickey and Walter O'Malley, who, like most men in their position, were ardent Republicans. The author does not consider the paradox of the club's political conservatism and its public image as the "liberal" team in New York, an image it acquired by having an ethnically balanced roster. "Red babies" were typically Dodger fans because the club was seen as the democratic team.

Prince offers an awkward analysis of Dodger manliness. He argues their manliness was constantly questioned because they seemed to "choke" every year; from 1949 to 1953, the Dodgers lost the last game of every season. Hence their manliness was only certified with their 1955 World Series victory over the Yankees. Actually, only Don Newcombe was considered a choker. How could one even think of questioning the manliness of Robinson, Hodges, or Furillo? Fans in the 1950s knew that no one was tougher than the Dodgers. And what about their accomplishments? It took the greatest single moment in baseball history (Bobby Thomson's home run) to beat them in 1951. Also, their crosstown nemesis, the Yankees, were one of the greatest teams of all time. Were the Buffalo Bills chokers because they lost four straight superbowls?

This clever, brief book (148 pages of text) needed more research and exposition, and more judicious analysis. Prince seeks to deconstruct the meaning of the Brooklyn Dodgers without fully discussing the "Boys of Summer" or the borough's history. Readers unfamiliar with Dodger history should read this book in conjunction with Kahn's *Boys of Summer*, Golenbock's *Bums*, and Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment*.

The research is largely based on a few newspapers; there were no interviews. Prince would have benefitted from consulting the Cal Abrams File in the Weiner Oral History Collection of the American Jewish Committee to help him describe

the life of a Brooklynite who made the Dodgers. Abrams was involved in one of the most famous incidents in Dodger lore when, at the end of the season in a game against the Phillies that would have given Brooklyn the pennant, he was thrown out at home in the ninth inning while he was trying to score on a single to center by Duke Snider. Abrams became the goat, but few spectators realized that Richie Ashburn was playing close to second to back up an anticipated pick-off throw that never came; third-base coach Milt Stock was fired after the season for sending Abrams home.

Prince is guilty of making some large leaps in judgment. Based on a discussion of two female fans, poetess Marianne Moore, and loud-mouthed working class fan Hilda Chester, he makes all sorts of judgments about female fandom. The author might have benefitted from talking about the Dodgers with living Dodger female fans—like Doris Kearns, who is herself writing a book about the Dodgers. He also could have benefitted by reading May Abrams's reminiscences in the Abrams File.

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