
KLEIN, ALAN M. *Baseball on the Border: A Tale of Two Laredos*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. Pp. xiv, 291. Notes, bibliographic essay, methods and perspective, index. \$29.95 cb.

From 1985 to 1994, the baseball club Los Tecolotes de los Dos Laredos (Owls of the Two Laredos) of the Mexican League existed as a binational enterprise playing a portion of its home games each season in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, and, across the international border, in Laredo, Texas. Separated by only a few hundred feet of the Rio Grande, the two Laredos are closely tied through shared history and linked economies. Although Laredo, Texas, was born of war between the United States and Mexico, it is bound to Nuevo Laredo by ethnic and cultural commonalities, and the two cities share in celebrations of the national holidays of each nation and in festivals such as Border Olympics and Juegos de la Amistad (Friendship Games).

Klein considers border baseball as representing an invented tradition, and proposes that border relations in general and the relations among Mexican and Anglo players and management in the Tecolotes organization reflect three forms of nationalism: autonationalism, binationalism, and transnationalism. The first three chapters outline histories of the two Laredos and baseball in the border country, developments in the Mexican League since 1940 (particularly the leadership of Jorge Pasquel and the “baseball wars” between the Mexican League

and U.S. major leagues), and the Nuevo Laredo teams (La Junta and Los Tecolotes) during the years before becoming binational.

For the story of the beginnings of baseball in the Laredos, Klein used several historical accounts by Mexican authors. The early game in Nuevo Laredo in the late 1800s is described by two eyewitnesses, one ninety and the other seventy-four years old (shades of the Doubleday tale), whose recollections are sufficiently detailed to seem reliable. Primary sources, such as the *Laredo Times*, are used to document later history of border baseball.

One chapter presents biographic sketches of selected team members and administrators, and another describes expressions of masculinity among the players. Klein's discussion of machismo seems to accept this stereotype as an accurate description of the typical Mexican male, but also questions the validity of the stereotype. His observation of gentleness and demonstrations of physical affection among Mexican players is presented in contrast with the behavior of Anglo players.

In the final two chapters, the playing seasons of 1993 and 1994, when the author spent several weeks with the Tecolotes, are described in some detail, including commentary on relations and attitudes of Mexican and Anglo (Import) players and glimpses of management and fans. Klein's personal experiences with the team are the most original contribution of the book.

An investigation of the Tecolotes as a binational institution would have benefitted from a focus on management, owners, and business relations. Klein is more interested in personalities and interpersonal relationships among Mexican players and between Anglos and Mexicans. It would be interesting to know whether these relationships are different in the Tecos organization as compared with other Mexican League clubs that hire Imports.

The two appendices discuss nationalism and its relationship to sport, and the methodologies employed in this study. Some readers may find it useful to begin with the appendices before starting the main text. Klein discusses his "personal approach" to research and writing and discounts any significant effects from his presence on the players and others he observed and interacted with for his study. He suggests that his background and behavior won him acceptance among the Mexican players and that his "foreignness" might even have been an advantage. He shows sensitivity and affection for his Mexican subjects and disdain for Anglos, including reference to the latter most often throughout the text by the derogatory term "gringo." Anglos are referred to as racists, but Mexicans, even when they are using racial epithets, are not.

Klein's writing style is engaging. His language includes both contemporary slang and erudite technical jargon. Of the approximately 150 errors that I noted in the text and notes, most involve Spanish usage or spelling, and only rarely do they affect meaning. The extensive notes reveal the breadth of Klein's research and provide many sources for further reading in ethnography, nationalism, and Mexican-U.S. border studies. The book is a useful contribution to Latin American sport history and also offers the author's views of Anglo-Mexican relations, the unique binational situation that existed for the Laredos' baseball team, and

nationalism as expressed through baseball and player relations. *Baseball on the Border* makes interesting reading and should appeal to both border scholars and baseball aficionados. It is recommended for graduate students and faculty.

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