
HARRIGAN, PATRICK. *The Detroit Tigers: Club and Community 1945-1995*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1997. Pp. x, 414. Notes, photographs, appendices, tables, bibliography, index. \$24.95 pb., \$65.00 cb.

In *The Detroit Tigers: Club and Community*, Patrick Harrigan seeks to do more than trace the fortunes and misfortunes, wins and losses of a major league team during the half century following the Second World War. In this ambitious study, the author assigned himself to four major tasks: he presents a discussion of momentous change in professional baseball from 1945 to 1995; he surveys personnel and performance of the Detroit baseball team during the same fifty years; he offers a critical analysis of the Detroit Tigers as a business and professional organization, with emphasis on administration and ownership from Walter O. Briggs to Michael Ilitch; and he seeks to place the organization and its players in the context of national conditions, especially social and economic developments in Michigan and the Detroit metropolitan area.

The effort to do so much in a limited space virtually guarantees that the discussion will be uneven in quality and sketchy in places. The best parts of the book concern the administration of the Tigers and the evolution (or was *it* revolution?) in baseball. Less complete and insightful, however, are the survey of players and performances and the author's placement of the organization in the context of "community."

Harrigan's discussion of such changes as desegregation of baseball, expansion, use of television, and consequences of the recent financial boom were intended as background to the evolution of the Tigers club, but the author properly and effectively presents them as vital subjects in themselves. The game has remained essentially the same for decades, but sociological and economic changes have been enormous: cozy old parks have been replaced by new, impersonal structures, and the horror story of player-management relations left baseball reeling in the 1990s—the future, not of baseball, but of the major leagues, in question. At the end, however, the players still made millions and demanded more, and still accepted payment for signing autographs.

In his description of the Tigers as a professional organization, Harrigan is at his best—developing personality and making effective use of statistics. He presents the Detroit club as a conservative organization—the last major league team to host night games, the last to sign a black athlete, and the next to last to use one—not given to the sort of gimmicks, promotions, and showmanship often associated with Bill Veeck (who nearly acquired the team in the 1950s). The club showed a profit every year until 1994, the time of the long strike. The major figures in the organization and in the book were the owners and administrators. The high point of Tiger ownership probably came under John Fetzer, whose tenure made up half of this period. The low point came at, or shortly following, the time of Tom Monaghan, who, for all his quarrels, controversies, and financial extravagance, ended up making a good deal of money from his experience with the Tigers.

Coverage of the “community” aspect of the subject and the treatment of the players suffers in comparison with the treatment of management. Aside from observations about rowdiness in and around the park, neglect of the African American community, and discussion of the controversy over a new stadium, which is excellent, the topic simply has to give way to other themes. Discussion of players and team performance meets somewhat the same fate. If considerably more extensive than coverage of community, players and teams do not get as much attention as one would like. The author summarizes the course of Tiger teams in given periods (the Golden Age of Detroit baseball, for example, was the 1980s). He gives detailed attention to the championship years of 1968 and 1984, and the near miss of 1987, and to describing the decline that followed. The players fade in and out, receiving a sentence, or part of a sentence, here and there. They are not developed as individuals or baseball personalities. The primary exception, a chapter titled “The Era of Personalities,” focuses almost entirely on a discussion of Denny McLain, Billy Martin, and Mark Fidrych. In the same fashion, Harrigan introduces such appealing topics as life in the minor leagues, being on the road in the majors, and baseball groupies, but he fails to develop any of them.

Clearly written, the book also is an exercise in professional scholarship. It contains a large number of notes. The author wisely resists the temptation to become caught up in the jargon of the topic. He does occasionally use questionable aspects of form and style, such as single quotation marks or quotations without introduction or indication of authorship. The research, which was substantial, came largely from public sources, such as Detroit newspapers, the *Sporting News*,

and memoirs. The claim to originality of information stems mostly from access to records of general manager Jim Campbell and interviews. The interviews, however, reaffirm that the meat of the book has to do with the administrative side. The most impressive interviewees include Fetzer, Campbell, president Bo Schembechler, Carl Lee, broadcaster Ernie Harwell, Major Coleman Young, and a few players. Equally conspicuous were names not mentioned. Monaghan and Ilitch would not talk; such old-timers as Hank Greenberg and Dizzy Trout, of course, could not. But the omission of such names as Kirk Gibson, Al Kaline, George Kell, Jack Morris, Mickey Lolich, McLain, Fidrych, and even Sparky Anderson, reiterates that treatment of the players was the book's weakest point.

Otherwise, this volume offers an excellent accumulation of information, analysis, and insight about the history of the Detroit Tigers and baseball in general. One might explain shortcomings, in some measure, by constraints of the time and space and, one must suspect, the willingness of others to cooperate. A scholar and a fan, wishing to be encouraging and struggling to avoid cynicism, the author ends on a note of cautious optimism about the future of major league baseball.

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