

Gmelch, George and J.J. Weiner. *In the Ballpark: the Working Lives of Baseball People*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1999. Pp. xii + 254. Illustrated. Notes, index. \$21.95 cb; \$14.95 pb.

This engaging volume introduces contemporary, behind-the-scenes baseball people in the same way that Lawrence Ritter's classic *Glory of Their Times* presented the players of the Dead Ball Era. Like Bitter's work, *In the Ballpark* promises to become a classic of oral history. Halfway through reviewing the book, I began recommending it to friends and students. Now I am considering it as a required reading in my sports history courses. In 1988, John Thorn and *The Sporting News* depicted the variety of modern baseball in pictorial form with the beautiful *The Game for All America*; Gmelch and Weiner have taken the next step in revealing the professional baseball workplace.

The book examines 21 individuals connected with contemporary baseball, ranging from a minor-league club house manager to a major-league beer vendor. There are insightful portraits of widely recognized personalities such as Bernie Williams and Jim Leyland, but the essence of this effort is its study of lesser-known figures, including a long time major league usher, a small-town baseball writer, a minor-league trainer, and a groundskeeper. A minor league manager, general manager, and player join a major league mascot, a media relations assistant, and an umpire in illustrating the variety of baseball occupations. Combined, the interviews give us a portrait of the complexity and diversity of professional baseball and an understanding of its demands and appeal as a vocation.

Gmelch, a former minor-league player turned anthropologist, and Weiner, a former minor-league intern turned anthropology student, outline and present their interviews in a compelling narrative that brings each subject to life and leaves the reader wishing the book was twice its size. At least three of the subjects are African-American and three are women, including Sherry Davis, the first female public address announcer in major sports. The authors comment on male dominance in baseball occupations, but are largely silent on race. One suspects that their data prevented generalization beyond what is widely believed about race and front-office employment practices. Photographs of many of the subjects are included, but each individual is so interesting that I wish that there were shots of all 21.

In their conclusion the writers combine the fruits of their interviews, other baseball experiences, and research in the literature to advance some generalizations on the baseball business and its appeal. Excepting major league owners, players, and high officials; most baseball employees work longer hours for less pay than comparable employment in other businesses. Many jobs include heavy burdens on family life. Several of the interviews underscore these sacrifices poignantly. Yet Gmelch and Weiner find that job satisfaction among baseball staffers is much higher than other vocations. They suggest that the sense of community, the informality and variety of the workplace experience, and the opportunity to work in the ballpark setting account for this atypical worker satisfaction and the phenomenon of so many people leaving other employment to join the baseball fraternity. The authors recognize that baseball

shares much with other American enterprise: "There is ever increasing bureaucracy, commercialization, hierarchy and quantification; and the bottom line remains the bottom line" (246). But they observe that the essence of baseball as a game with its excitement, daily wins and losses, and team atmosphere create an enthusiasm rare in other lines of employment.

The book should serve as a model for many future studies. Thesis advisors at large universities could profitably direct some of their students to examine the nature of the contemporary university sports business. Similar studies of collegiate football and basketball employees—athletic directors, parking attendants, athletes and academic support personnel—might prove equally compelling. A wide range of similar studies would test and enhance the generalizations laid out by Gmelch and Weiner, and compare working in baseball with other sports.

This book obviously appeals to any serious student of contemporary sports and to those interested in the modern work experience. Anyone interested in baseball at the park will enjoy it, and after reading may adopt the authors' approach: "Now when at the ballpark, we find ourselves paying as much attention to the workers off the playing field and their routines as the play itself" (xii).

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Koppett, Leonard. *Koppett's Concise History of Major League Baseball*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998. Pp. xiv + 521. Tables, appendices, index. \$34.95 cb.

In a volume with over five hundred pages of text, some in double columns, veteran sportswriter Leonard Koppett produces a thorough, albeit not concise, history of major league baseball. In his preface, Koppett states that his target audience is general readers, particularly younger baseball fans who seem to lack an appreciation for the origins of major league baseball. Accordingly, Koppett's volume will not replace the histories by Charles Alexander, Harold Seymour, David Voigt, and Benjamin Rader upon the scholar's book shelf.

However, serious students of baseball will find much of value in Koppett's work. The short, yet amazingly detailed, summaries of each season, including World Series, All-Star games, and playoffs, furnish the playing field context for the evaluation of more complex changes in American culture and baseball. But Koppett's greatest contribution is his narrative account regarding how the business of baseball has evolved since the 1840s. While this chronology of baseball as an industry may alienate his more general readership, Koppett's insights make the contemporary financial structure of major league baseball understandable as the culmination of a struggle between owners, intent upon controlling the labor supply, and players, seeking the establishment of a countervailing power to monopolistic business practices.

Thus, Koppett observes that the National League was established in 1876 by Albert Goodwill Spalding and William Hulbert in an effort to impose control over the talent