

The writing and format of this slim book are exceedingly annoying, as the text is broken up into small newspaper-size paragraphs (one sentence or one line), and an extra space separates each of these “paragraphs.” Given the excessive amount of white space on the pages, one would have thought that an appendix listing Waldorf’s year-by-year and game-by-game record would have made a lot of sense. This book is recommended for only those who have a specialized interest in coaches’ biographies, no matter how flawed.

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DI SALVATORE, BRYAN. *A Clever Base-Ballist: The Life and Times of John Montgomery Ward*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1999. Pp. 480. Illustrated, notes, and bibliography. \$27.50 cb.
 STEVENS, DAVID. *Baseball’s Radical for All Seasons: A Biography of John Montgomery Ward*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998. Pp. 272. Index and bibliography. \$39.50 cb.

David Stevens and Bryan Di Salvatore have written texts detailing and examining the life of one of baseball’s early pioneers, John Montgomery Ward. The treatment of Ward in both texts is evenhanded and balanced. Neither author tries to ignore the difficulties Ward encountered, especially those of his own making. Yet, at the same time the authors acknowledge the contributions Ward brought to our National Pastime as a player, manager and official.

The biggest difference in these two texts is clear from the titles: one is strictly a biography, while the other places Ward in the larger social context. Di Salvatore’s text is not a typical biography; he is interested in the social issues and events during Ward’s life as well as what was happening in baseball itself. Di Salvatore does not just discuss the teams and baseball events which Ward had a direct hand, but paints a picture of the surrounding situation to see just where and how Ward fits in. In this way the reader can make a more informed judgment about the influence and importance of John Montgomery Ward, without relying completely on the author’s assessment. On the other hand, David Stevens brings Ward to life in all his fiery glory. He portrays Ward as a radical out to change the way the establishment in baseball worked. The two texts together create an intriguing look at this fascinating figure in nineteenth-century baseball history.

Ward played from 1878-94 for three different teams: Providence, New York and Brooklyn. He played a number of different positions over the years and appears to have played them all well. As a hitter Ward did not display much power, but was a scrappy hitter who scored a lot of runs and took the extra base whenever he had a chance. He did not strike out much, since he generally made contact with the ball. On these facts both books agree, but Di Salvatore gives a more complete picture by also including information about Ward’s minor league career. Ward spent two seasons in the minors playing with five different clubs. To see Ward’s managerial record the reader needs to consult Stevens text. Between the two books readers will be able to pull together the full picture of Ward’s statistical record.

Moving beyond the statistical picture, what do we discover about Ward the ball player? Di Salvatore describes Ward the pitcher as “crafty, a thinker, a brain man, the professor... He didn’t (or couldn’t) overpower batters, pitchers; he outwitted them” (123). Stevens agrees with this assessment, calling him “really tricky” (11). Ward was willing to try any trick to help his team win. Ward’s small stature and young age made it necessary for him to rely on his brains rather than his brawn.

Ward was also used to relying on himself, since he had become an orphan at fourteen years of age. The absence of parental guidance and support did not stop him from achieving his goals. When he decided to go away to school, Ward had to work his way through; at times this took longer than he would have liked, but in the end he triumphed. Overcoming obstacles such as losing his parents helped Ward strengthen his character and his resolve. He was forced to rely on himself, both good and bad. While at school David Stevens says Ward “carved a reputation at school with his scholarship, temper and independence” (3). His baseball skills were the real key, however. When it came to looking for a job Ward relied on his athletic abilities to try to make a living.

Early in his baseball career, Ward moved around a lot. When one team ran out of money, he hitched a ride to the next place that would offer him a chance. David Stevens follows his early travels thoroughly and in a chronological order that is easily traced. Di Salvatore, on the other hand, does not stick with a single topic for long before he is exploring another related issue, later returning to the original question at hand. At times this can be a bit confusing and makes piecing together the record of Ward a little more difficult. For example, chapter 10 focuses on Wards early career and his motivations for playing. After leaving the Syracuse/Rochester, teams Di Salvatore ends the chapter indicating Ward will next be seen in a Providence uniform. The next chapter then begins by explaining about newspapers and major events in America before slowly returning to Wards 1878 debut with Providence.

Both texts talk about Ward’s life off the field as well. His relationship with Helen Dauvray is discussed in both, though in greater detail in Di Salvatore’s volume. While their sometimes stormy relationship appears in a few paragraphs in Stevens work, Di Salvatore uses more than a chapter to discuss the actress’s own popularity and her desire to sponsor the Dauvray Cup games.

Stevens and Di Salvatore focus much attention on Wards role in the player revolt of the last decade of the nineteenth century. Ward used his skills as a lawyer to help engineer a break from the existing league and try to take control out of the hands of the owners. This was Ward at his most radical and earns him accolades among some of the players and the disdain of others. The creation of the Players’ League was one of Wards greatest maneuvers, but in the end it failed, leaving Ward frustrated and anxious to prove himself to the baseball world and beyond.

Both texts provide a fascinating glimpse into the life of an early baseball pioneer. Ward played a significant role in the early days of our National Pastime and heretofore has been relatively unknown. The authors correct this oversight with excellent research and many stories of his exploits. Stevens writes in a more traditional fashion for biographies, while Di Salvatore branches out into many areas that only slightly touched on Ward’s own life. Reading the two together will give readers a complete picture, but a reader interested just in Ward and his baseball life will find Di Salvatore’s book somewhat frustrating with its inclusion of so much more of the story of nineteenth-century America.

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